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Briefs by Day, Broadway by Night: Legal Follies 2026 Raises \$22,000 for Prairie Harm Reduction

The 57th annual Legal Follies transformed the Broadway Theatre into a celebration of student talent, tradition and \$22,000 in charitable impact.



Law students (L-R) Adi Faigelman, Taylor Ernst, Jetta Bilsky, Janay Kent, Reece Santos and Amy Constant | Alaina Weltz

Hajra Ghuman

The lights were dim, and the crowd buzzed with excitement. It was time for the 57th annual return of Legal Follies on Jan. 30 and 31, one of the most anticipated events at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law. The Broadway Theatre had been transformed into a pirate-themed atmosphere, where law students would showcase their creativity, laugh at each other's antics and simultaneously raise money for charity.

This talent show composed entirely of law students was a celebration of community, compassion and purpose. Legal Follies raised a total of \$22,000 for Prairie Harm Reduction, a Saskatoon nonprofit that provides harm reduction services, housing support and community-based care for individuals and families affected by substance use.

By the time opening night arrived, the logistics were secured, the theatre transformed and the finances were sorted. The groundwork had been laid, and it was time for the stage to come alive.

Among them was first-year law student Danielle Skinner, who brought something entirely new to the stage with her baton twirling.

Skinner's act blended one-baton, two-baton and three-baton techniques with dance and acrobatics, including aerial tosses and contact work that demanded both precision and athleticism.

Her biggest challenge was the space on stage. Baton twirling is highly dependent on ceiling height and spatial awareness. "I usually train in a gym with high ceilings," she noted, acknowledging that she was prepared to adapt her performance to whatever the Broadway Theatre allowed.

From the moment her routine began, it was clear the risk paid off.

"I feel really proud of how it went. Everything came together the way I hoped it would, and the crowd's energy was even better than I expected," Skinner reflected afterward.

For Skinner, performing something she genuinely loved and feeling that appreciation reflected at her was joyous. "Feeling the audience respond to the routine, especially through cheers and applause, made the experience even more exciting and enjoyable."

If Legal Follies is about challenging expectations, Skinner's act did exactly that. She hoped the audience would see baton

twirling as "unique, exciting and captivating."

As the opening act of the event, her impressive antics set the bar, or should I say baton, high for what was to come after.

Next up was the Law Games dance, which leaned fully into collective energy.

Choreographed by second-year law student Jordan Kucharski, the Wild West-themed routine first debuted at Law Games in Quebec City earlier this term. Although she had known since last spring that she would be leading the dance, the assigned era was not revealed until mid-November, which was leading up to finals.

In Quebec, rehearsals were squeezed between competitive events and social obligations, often in tight hotel spaces. A fun little routine ended up becoming a stressful experience for everyone involved, according to Kucharski.

However, Legal Follies allowed for a different experience.

"Actually having the time and space to work on it this time has been a game changer," Kucharski said.

The whole point of the Law Games dance number was never about achieving perfection. "It's not meant to be serious, it's not meant to be technical, my goal in putting it together really was just that it would be fun and enjoyable to watch!"

It was clear that the students on stage dancing away in their western-inspired routine emulated the spirit of Legal Follies, and it was just as fun watching them showcase that.

With the choreography cleared and the music faded, the gears shifted into a comedic routine.

Third-year law student Brandon Johnson took on that challenge with a ten-minute solo standup set titled What Would You Do? Built around a true and deliberately uncomfortable story, the act invited the audience into a scenario where timing, restraint and silence were as important as the punchlines.

It was clear from Johnson's performance how diligent he must have been with the preparation of his routine, from writing it out to memorizing it in its entirety. However, when it comes to live comedy, it is never as static as simply publicly speaking.

Throughout the set, frequent heckling and interruptions shifted the rhythm of the room, transforming what had been carefully timed pauses into moments of unpredictability. Rather than retreating, Johnson leaned into the challenge. He had rehearsed under deliberately distracting conditions, preparing himself to respond or adjust when needed.

In that sense, the interruptions became part of the performance itself. It showcased how standup is uniquely exposed, dependent not only on preparation but on audience dynamics.

Looking back, Johnson was candid about the learning curve. "Next time, I would write for laughs before cleverness," he said.

Perhaps it was that vulnerability that made the set unforgettable.

The energy rose once again, but this time it was due to this next act's rhythm. Second-year law student Veronica Goyeneche took the stage alongside her student-not-actually-in-law dance partner with a high-energy salsa performance that immediately shifted the atmosphere. Fast-paced, joyful and fearless, the routine blended sharp technique with competition-style tricks that kept the audience fully engaged.

Although neither performer grew up formally training in the style, their shared enthusiasm and chemistry translated into a routine that felt polished and intentional.

As working students, rehearsal time was limited and often improvised. Without consistent access to mirrors or studio space, they relied on repetition, recording themselves and constant communication.



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Legal Follies

Continued from the front cover.

Even so, Goyeneche described the process as smoother than expected, crediting her partner's ability to understand and build on her vision. Their preparation paid off as it was one of the fan-favourites within the event.

"I was surprised I could still hit the tricks the way I did, especially with how nervous I felt," she reflected afterward. "I kind of surprised myself, which I'll take as a win."

What Legal Follies does best is transforming nerves into joy and effort into shared celebration, which Goyeneche contributed to significantly.

If the salsa set the theatre alight, the next performance invited it to slow down.

In her self-described "Year 8" as the career development director at the College of Law, Shari Thompson returned to the Follies stage with a heartfelt rendition of "Gravity" by Sarah McLachlan.

Each year, Thompson and a close friend make a tradition of attending a concert together and choosing a song that resonates deeply enough to carry onto the Follies stage. This year, it was "Gravity". This is a song that explores the evolving relationship between a mother and daughter, as distance and independence grow when the daughter heads off to university.

She later connected with USask Law alumnus Joel Seaman to accompany her on guitar, adjusting her ear from piano, which is her musical background, to a different instrumental foundation.

With work responsibilities intensifying during recruit season and Career Forum, time was limited, but Thomson stayed intentional in her preparation. That intention translated into a stage presence that the audience could not look away from.

As Thompson sang under the bright lights, unable to see the audience, the energy shifted into a connection with the crowd. On Saturday night, phones lit the theatre as audience members swayed along with their flashlights raised. This small but powerful gesture was a testament to the inclusive atmosphere Thompson's singing had created.

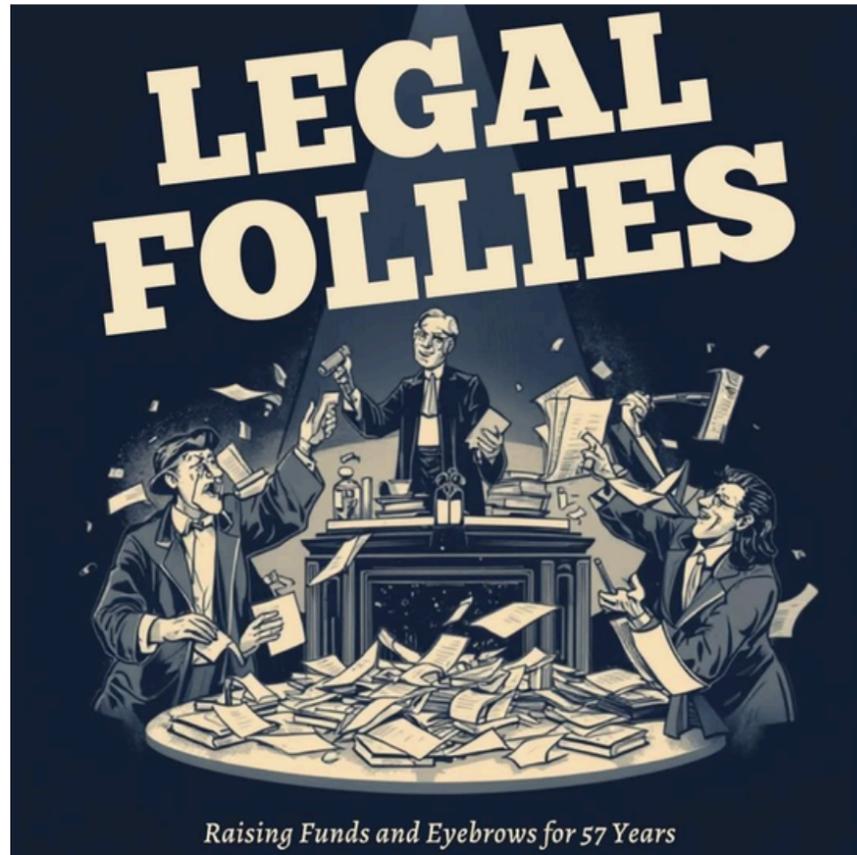
As the final notes of "Gravity" faded, the tempo shifted once again.

Second-year law student Kaelan Leslie took the stage in a very different fashion, this time bringing Scottish Highland dance to the Broadway Theatre. She performed to "Shut Up and Dance" by the Red Hot Chili Pipers, blending classical technique with a modern and energetic twist.

Dance is not simply a hobby for Leslie. She trains and teaches regularly, balancing practices between Calgary and Saskatoon while completing law school. "Dance

keeps me sane, active and grounded," she shared when asked how she manages this with the rest of her responsibilities. Bringing Highland dance to Follies was less about trying something new and more about sharing something that has always been a part of her identity.

Afterward, she described the experience simply and sincerely. "I absolutely adored performing at Follies; it felt like a huge success." Performing for classmates and professors added a layer of excitement, and she noted how special it feels when



someone in the audience has a personal connection to Highland dance or piping.

More than anything, her hope was that fellow students would see that it is possible to carry personal passions alongside the demands of law school. Leslie's impressive performance was a reminder that one's identity must continue even in academic pursuits.

In the follow-up act, third-year law students Abrametz and Alkida Luca brought humour to the evolution of law school style in their act, Motion to Slay. The performance traced the transformation many students know all too well. First-year students arrive bright and polished. By second year, sleep takes priority over presentation. By third year, comfort wins. Those who are headed to big law have oversized suits as their inevitable appearance.

What made the act particularly engaging was the creative freedom given to participants. "We let them have creative freedom for their outfits, and they did amazing," Abrametz shared. That individuality translated into an act that felt both relatable and playful.

After the show, Abrametz reflected that the act "went even better than planned" and credited the group for fully bringing the

idea to life.

Right before the intermission, there was one more act that is one of the staples of Legal Follies, and it is the Ladies' Kickline.

Now a longstanding tradition within the College of Law, the Ladies' Kickline brings together women from all three years, along with faculty, to close the night with confidence and energy. This year's routine followed a familiar formula. A themed opening set to Britney Spears

Saturday was next level," she shared.

Beyond the choreography, what makes the Ladies Kickline special is the community it fosters. "Kickline is such an incredible opportunity to get to know girls from the college I previously may not have interacted with much," Kucharski reflected.

For many who grew up dancing competitively, it offers a chance to return to something that once defined them. "It feels so amazing to get the opportunity to dance again," she added.

The intermission was followed by one of the more recent traditions at Legal Follies: the Dating Game, a College of Law parody act that blends improv, inside jokes within the College and just enough chaos to keep the audience involved.

The act was created last year by Bilsky, who drew inspiration from a dating game segment she saw on RuPaul's Drag Race Allstars. "I just thought it was hilarious," Bilsky explained. "Mainly, I just copied what the dating game show actually looks like and recreated it. I basically just did it again this year."

This year's concept expanded into two versions. On Friday, Bilsky hosted the bachelor edition, and on Saturday, she became the bachelorette, while second-year law student Tyler Slaney took over as host.

The format followed the familiar dating game structure. Three mystery contestants answered questions in three rounds, hoping their responses would win the bachelor's or bachelorette's final pick.

Both Bilsky and Slaney emphasized that what looked effortless on stage required significant planning behind the scenes. Bilsky said most of her work for Friday night involved "recruiting people to partake, writing the questions and the scripts, vetting the contestant answers, and then making and finding the props."

Slaney similarly described "a lot of writing and planning" for Saturday night. This included "writing the questions [Bilsky] will ask her suitors, writing my own script as the host, planning out my cupid costume."

Although much work went into this segment, it was the unpredictability that became part of the appeal when watching.

For Bilsky, the highlight was the audience itself. "The best part was how responsive the audience was. You could feel when something landed," she said.

Slaney described Saturday's crowd as equally intense. "The crowd was so overwhelmingly engaged, shouting support for specific bachelors and slandering others, laughing and shouting and booing at the top of their lungs," he recalled.

transitioned into the signature kickline finale set to AC/DC, blending nostalgia with bold choreography.

Second-year law student and co-organizer of the Ladies' Kickline, Skyler Gagne, described the preparation as a collective effort supported heavily by alumna Jordyn Nachtegaele, who returned to choreograph the routine. "She choreographs all of the numbers, posts videos of the choreography for the group to review and teaches us the numbers at practice," she explained.

The other biggest challenge, besides the limited time to rehearse, was ensuring that everyone felt comfortable. "I know the choreo is outside a few of the girls' comfort zone, so making sure they're actually having fun and feel okay with what they're doing is really so important," said Kucharski, who also helped organize the Ladies' Kickline, in addition to her Wild West number.

This required discipline and trust within the process. The performance the ladies put on was watched in awe by the audience, making Gagne and Kucharski's challenges worth the hassle.

Friday night brought strong reactions, but Saturday exceeded expectations. "The best part of doing kickline is the reaction from the crowd. Friday night was great, but

For Slaney, part of the fun was building small theatrical details around the script. He noted that dressing as Cupid and adding “the Secret Service” to keep the bachelors in check helped elevate the act.

In a show defined by surprise, The Dating Game worked because it invited the audience into the joke. It was unique since the answers were not rehearsed, and the outcome was decided in the moment. It made the entire theatre part of the act, which is a tradition that deserves to carry on for years to come.

Another returning act brought precision back to the Legal Follies stage.

Third-year law student Jill Klassen performed alongside her dance partner and fellow third-year law classmate Laura Chartier in a choreographed routine that incorporated chairs as props. The piece, which they began preparing in October, was built on their previous dance training and a shared creative vision.

Starting early allowed them to balance rehearsals with exams, holidays and the demands of the school year without feeling rushed. The rehearsal process, Klassen said, is always one of the best parts. “[Chartier] and I get along really well, so I always look forward to getting to create and dance with her,” she shared.

Incorporating chairs into the choreography added complexity and, at times, unintended humour. “Using a chair as a prop can be dangerous at times, and we’ve definitely ended up with some funny moments and even some bruises,” she admitted.

As with many acts, audience reaction made the moment. “The audience reactions are always the best part about being on stage. I can always hear my friends cheering us on, and that makes the performance so much more fun,” she said.

For Klassen, Legal Follies continues to live up to expectations year after year. “It’s such a fun experience, and I would highly encourage any law student to perform during their time in law school. The support you get from your peers is unmatched,” she shared.

In addition to directing this year’s production, Ernst stepped into the spotlight herself.

Ernst performed “Make You Feel My Love,” a song she chose for deeply personal reasons. With over twenty years of performance experience, including international appearances and nightly shows at the Calgary Stampede’s Grandstand, singing is something she once did on a much larger stage before stepping away at the start of law school.

“My friends had never heard me sing before,” she explained, noting that they had been asking since her first year in law school.

When Ernst stepped on that stage, it was evident why her friends had been asking

her to sing for the last three years. Her singing blew the crowd away as they watched in awe. After her mesmerizing performance, the audience erupted in applause.

One of Ernst’s favourite moments came when the audience began singing along. “It always makes me happy to know that people are connecting to the song and enjoying themselves,” she reflected.

She noted that this year felt like a compilation of her many Follies memories and a reminder of her desire to ensure that future classes have the same opportunity to create meaningful experiences of their own.

For Ernst, the performance was a full-circle moment. For others, her performance was one of the most moving moments of the event.

There are acts at Legal Follies, and then there are the Hallmeyers, who were next up.

Selected in secrecy and revealed only when the time is right, the Hallmeyers remain one of the College’s most elusive traditions. Three students from each year are quietly recruited and sworn into a brotherhood defined by spectacle and just enough risk to keep the audience entertained while holding its breath.

Preparation begins long before the stage lights warm the theatre. Recruitment, Slaney explained, is “both a science and an art.” It is not about technical perfection. It is about finding people willing to “be the butt of their own joke in front of a sold-out theatre and keep charm and parody at the forefront of our performance.”

When asked about any pre-show rituals the group may partake in, Slaney remained deliberately ominous. One might assume that, as this year’s Hallmeyers captain, he would have the authority to reveal at least a few secrets.

“I truly wish that I could share with the world all the fun, secretive, pre-show antics in which the Hallmeyers indulge,” he admitted. “The unfortunate reality is that if I divulged to the media any of our guarded traditions, the name of our favourite bar where we have our meetings or even the brand of coconut oil we slather all over each other, the others would have my head.”

When asked to describe the act in three words, Slaney chose “absurd, hilarious [and] electric.” Judging by the reaction in the theatre, the performance delivered on each.

Despite the spectacle, Slaney hoped the audience would not take them too seriously and would recognize that they do not take themselves too seriously either. Their humour lay in parody. “We’re what if Chippendales [were] nine average dudes trying their best,” he said.

“The Hallmeyers borrow and embrace

dance styles that are deeply connected to movements across culture, including drag, burlesque, go-go and cab. We hope that the crowd sees what we do as embracing those styles and letting you laugh at just how short we can fall when we boldly try to bridge the gap between us and the pros through the power of friendship and Fireball whiskey.”

If their rituals remain guarded for eternity, that secrecy may be the very thing that keeps the legend alive.

The last act was a staple within Legal Follies, and that is The Dissent.

A resident rock band at the College of Law, The Dissent has become a Follies mainstay for over a decade. Third-year law student Jared Graham, who plays guitar, said he has met former members who played with the band going back to at least 2013, and described it as “something passed down through generations of law students.”

This year’s band included second-year law students Lucas Brown on bass, Jaylyn Kim on piano and Joy Olusanya on vocals. First-year law students in the band were Lauren Hope on vocals, Jackson Perryman on guitar and James Kumaran on drums.

“For The Dissent, we started planning back in the summer,” Graham explained.

Auditions ran through September and October, the lineup was chosen in October, and the group began meeting in November to talk through songs and ideas. They paused in December due to finals, then returned in January for rehearsals one to two times per week, often lasting three or four hours.

Despite the time commitment, Graham described the rehearsal process as genuinely enjoyable. “This is my third year playing with the band, and no shade to any of the previous iterations that I’ve been

part of, but I think this is the most talented version I’ve played with,” he said. “We’ve had a lot of moments just being impressed at how fast everyone has fit together.”

On show nights, Graham’s pre-show routine meant arriving early to “scope out the stage,” say hello to the sound and stage crew and visualize the performance. “Make sure I still know how to play everything,” he said. “Nothing too crazy.”

After the weekend, Graham was unequivocal about how it went. The audience reaction, he said, made the experience feel surreal.

“I just loved feeling the love from the crowd. I think for the most part I keep to myself at school, so just hearing people yell my name is kind [of] surreal,” he shared. “Getting that kind of support from my classmates is so surreal, and I’ll be forever grateful.”

For Graham, Follies continues to exceed expectations, especially in a venue like the Broadway Theatre. “Broadway Theatre is such an excellent venue, getting to perform there is an absolute treat,” he said, noting that this was his last year performing at Follies and that the experience has surpassed expectations every year.

A tradition carried forward, year after year, The Dissent is always a wonderful closing act to Legal Follies.

Students, professors, alumni, friends and family gathered around for talent and humour. Traditions were preserved, while new memories were made. Thanks to it all, \$22,000 will now support life-saving work in Saskatoon.

Legal Follies may be composed of spectacles and satirical acts, but above all, it is a community.

See you all again next year.



A Mid-year Discussion with the USSU

USSU executives talk roles, achievements and future plans, and address recent online criticisms in an interview meant to get a glimpse of what the union has been up to since being elected.



USSU Executive members (L-R) Emily Hubick, Emma Wintermute, Norah Jacob and Owen Deis | Meerah Abesia

Colton Danneberg

The Sheaf had a chance to catch up with all four executives of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) at the end of January. The USSU Executive is made up of President Emma Wintermute, who is pursuing a Double Honours degree in Gender, Sexualities and Social Justice Studies and History; Vice-President Operations and Finance Owen Deis, enrolled in an Honours degree in History; Vice-President Academic Affairs Norah Jacob, a Psychology major with a minor in Math; and Vice-President Student Affairs Emily Hubick, who is pursuing a bachelor's of Biomedical Science, majoring in Cellular, Physiological and Pharmacological Sciences.

An Overview of Executive Roles

When asked about what the union generally does and has been doing since September, Wintermute replied that the president's role is made up of three main characteristics: "an advocate, a navigator and a support."

Wintermute explains that "I definitely learned that [navigating the university] is much more complex and entangled when I started this job than I anticipated, and supporting not only students through that navigation, [but other executives] in that navigation, and then as an advocate because there are a lot of things that fall through the cracks at the university that people become desensitized or accustomed to [because] they're operating in an institution ... [It's] having to continue to help wake people up to say that this is an issue, this is a problem [and] it needs to be addressed, here's why, [and] let's work on trying to figure this out. And then that cycle goes over again."

Hubick's role as VP of student affairs focuses on fulfilling the non-academic aspect of university life. "A big part of my role is planning events and trying to get [a variety] of events, [like] ones that are specific to international students, or sustainability, accessibility ... A lot of my personal role is [also] direct student support."

Hubick explains that inquiries from students range from "accessibility concerns, to parking, to people wanting to put up posters. So it's kind of all over the place — and we've had a lot of projects and a lot of cases coming up over the year that have been month-long endeavours and then ones that just [require] one email to figure out."

Jacob explains that her role as VP academic affairs "is all about relationships at three levels. I have relationships with students where I work with them on individual academic grievances and cases. These can be really short — sometimes it can be for a misconduct case ... or it can be something a little more long-term like an appeal or something related to expulsion or suspension."

"Secondarily, I work a lot with the university's student support staff. That [includes] academic advisors, Student Affairs and Outreach, Student Wellness [and] ISSAC. [Thirdly,] the group that I probably talk to the most is university administration, so this is Vice Provost [Academic], academic deans, anyone in a student-focused administrative role ... This is where long-standing policy about learning, teaching, pedagogy can really change as well as policy regarding students."

Deis says that his job as VP of operations

and finance includes a number of different roles. "I oversee all the campus groups, so it's give or take 170 different groups [ranging from] a handful of people and thousands of people, depending on which college or constituency. I am their first point of support for finances, insurance, advertising, pretty much anything a group can think of ... I'm also responsible for our relationship with Saskatoon transit, managing the bus pass [and overseeing] student fees for the USSU and our annual budget."

Ongoing Projects

One of Wintermute's main projects this year has been working to update the university's sexual violence policy. "The Sexual Violence Policy at the University is 10 years out of date, which for a U15 is terrible." U15 refers to a member university of U15 Canada, a coalition of 15 of Canada's most prominent research institutions, including USask. "Most U15s comparable to us have a standard where every three to five years they update that policy. They make a point to review it or they are mandated by the provincial government to review [the policy]. We don't have that mandate here, and our board of governors [has] not taken upon themselves in the last 10 years to review that document."

When asked about how a sexual violence policy can go so long without being updated, Wintermute said, "That's the downfall of an institution, is that there [are] a lot of policies, a lot of procedures, a lot of committees and people change positions or roles and then it just gets forgotten. Someone really pioneers it and champions it, and then that person leaves, and then there's no follow-up built into [the] structure. I would imagine at the university level that's what happened. Or,

which I hope is not the case, could be [that] societally we have these big moments, like #MeToo, and there's this big brush of support and everyone rallies behind something, and then that stops ... I think it's also an uncomfortable topic for a lot of people and the language has changed a lot over the years, so people just tend to shy away from it, not wanting to mess up. But then, inadvertently, you go 10 years without having the policy updated."

Another of Wintermute's goals was to create a closer connection to the Prince Albert campus. "PA students have never had a member of Student Council representing them, despite the fact that they pay our fees and they are University of Saskatchewan students. So we have a counsellor this year for PA [and] we meet regularly with their administrator."

Alongside updating policy around sexual violence and creating a closer partnership with the PA campus, Wintermute explains that another project she has been working on is having more discussions with USask's Indigenous students. Wintermute says that the USSU relationship with Indigenous students "[has] been a really fractured relationship ... I'm a white girl — so I'm not going to say we've made inroads, because I don't know how people define that for themselves, but I'm happy that we have a functioning Indigenous student advisory committee that meets monthly [and] I meet every month with the Office of the Vice-Provost of Indigenous Engagement ... I think that's been something that I hoped to see some movement on this year, and I have felt really grateful for the kinds of conversations that I've been brought into as a result."

Besides being engaged in policy work at the university level, Hubick explained how the USSU keeps students engaged by hosting a number of events each month. Although attendance for school events was low throughout the pandemic, Hubick notes that the USSU has seen a steady increase in attendance throughout the year. "I think this year I've seen a lot [more], not only in the attendance at events, but just in general interactions on campus that just seem like we're moving closer and closer together and things are getting back to where they used to be in terms of social gatherings and things like that."

When questioned about how the USSU navigates its relationship with the university, Jacob pointed out that it is a slow and complex process. "A lot of the stuff we do [is] very long-term projects at an academic level. The university moves at a glacial [pace]. It is notoriously a slow process, and anything academically essentially comes from the bottom. It goes through the department, through the

college, all the way up to admin, through a committee, through University Council, and it has to come all the way back down ... [It's] recognizing where students fit in that portfolio, and if they don't fit, creating a space where they are able to work in and a lot of that means changing policy or creating new policy."

Jacob also notes the inevitable constraint of time that each USSU executive faces. "You're only here for a year, and in one year, there's only so much you can do. What I found really important is to make sure ... you put it into an agenda that maybe is not going to go through until October 2026, but it's in there, and somebody will have to look at it."

Addressing Transparency

When Deis was asked about the longstanding student concern of student fees that fund the USSU, his reply was frank: "I think we're always going to get that [question] ... I don't have a good answer to getting rid of that challenge, [but] a goal of mine at least is to make students more aware of where their money is going, why it's needed."

Jacob adds that "It's unfortunate that a lot of our work can be behind the scenes, and I do think that's a fundamental flaw with us that we're just not able to fully explain what we do. A lot of the stuff is so confidential that I'm not allowed to talk about it ... Something I do hope students know is that we are full-time. We [did] try to make an initiative over [the] summer to fully publicize what we were doing every single day of the week ... The only reason we didn't keep it up throughout this year [is because] it's a bit too spontaneous right now ... I could start off the week with five meetings, and then I end up with 25 meetings."

Wintermute says that "It's good that students keep engaging and pushing the union, as much as those conversations are always hard to have, they need to be had. For every student that puts forth a question [or] comment about something that pushes the union to do more work. And so I think that push-pull is very important ... And I don't think [we have] ever seen that criticism or push as bad. It's been more of a fuel to keep going. It can get frustrating when admin pushes you back, or this thing doesn't happen, or [when] we are one student voice or vote on a committee of 20 other people. And so it can get isolating. I think having students still be engaging and encouraging that we want to see more, [or ask] why does this happen. That pushes us to want to continue to fulfill outcomes for students."

"[I want] students to know that their concerns matter to us," Jacob adds. "There was a conversation about two years ago regarding executives' classes, [and] there was a response to that. Now our classes are publicized [and] our credit units are available on the website for everyone to see. And that's the same thing here. If there's anything that students think we can do to make us more transparent to the public, we are absolutely ready to hear that

and to make headway on that. We want people to know that their concerns do [get] noticed."

"I think the four of us have made a real effort to not create this weird kind of barrier that we're not students," Wintermute says. "We want to make sure everyone knows we are undergrads. We don't want there to be this perceived hierarchy ... There might be an ivory tower in the terms of the [university] administration, but we definitely don't want to [make students] feel like we're in an ivory tower here at the USSU. We're just students. We're one of you, paid by you and that means you can ask questions you want [and] hopefully we are able to answer them."

Elections

Despite there being some vocal critics of the USSU, voter turnout and Annual General Meeting (AGM) attendance in the past few years have not been substantial. Although there were 21,267 undergraduate students enrolled in the 2024/2025 year, only 2,205 students voted in the last USSU election, putting that at a voter turnout of roughly 10 per cent across all colleges.

When asked about how the USSU is working to improve student election turnout, Hubick said that the union was in the process of interviewing for a student elections coordinator. "We had a student [who] would coordinate volunteers and go out around campus and engage with students. We had tables, they were down in the tunnel, out at our meet and greet type event. They were a neutral party to be around campus during that time, encouraging students to vote and get interested in the elections and to make it a lot more accessible and easy."

The USSU is also looking to get PA students interested in voting, alongside more collaboration between them and the main campus. The executives also explained that there is an effort to get candidates from multiple colleges for more diversity of backgrounds on the USSU executive.

Regarding Recent Criticism of the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions Post

On Jan. 27, the USSU issued a statement on social media in support of a divestment campaign in solidarity with what the United Nations commission of inquiry has condemned as a genocide of Palestinians by Israel. The decision for posting this letter was made on November 20th of 2025, as a motion at the AGM. The statement received mixed reactions online, with some criticizing the union for not issuing a statement on the recent state crackdowns on protestors in Iran, and others criticizing the union for posting this message on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Wintermute explains that "In the header of that letter, you'll see that it was something that the membership voted on at the AGM for the USSU to author and publish. The reason the letter came out in January and not immediately following the AGM was

[because] we have a process that we go through. Following the AGM, it was written and received by the four of us within a week of the AGM, [as] it was definitely a top priority item. And then it goes to the advocacy committee within our student council, [and] I chair that committee. So the advocacy committee, which is composed of a couple student counsellors, take the time to review the letter. And then it was finals season, so we had the break ... We came back in January, it was brought to council, council had no problems [and] did not wish to make any edits ... It was sent to the Board of Governors and the university [admin], as mandated by that AGM resolution. And then we wanted to make a recap of the AGM ... and once that video was made and edited and posted, then we posted the letter. So that was the context behind [it]."

"In terms of the content of that letter," Wintermute continues, "[it] is a very important statement that needed to be made to the university with everything going on in the world, and it was not in any way an attempt to silence any of the other horrific and violent and genocidal events that are going on in the world."

The USSU posted a response online the day after the letter was posted, which addressed criticism that the union was favouring one cause over another, writing that "the USSU is committed to amplifying the voices of all students and standing in solidarity with those impacted by the events and violence taking place globally."

Wintermute says that "We're never going to only be here for one kind of student or one kind of voice or one kind of perspective. We're here to represent everyone ... I think it's important for that feedback to come through [and] for students to [say] 'we don't feel visible right now and we're hurting' ... because we need to know that so that we can try to help and correct [that] because we make mistakes too ... [and] there will never be a lack of things that we could not be getting on board for, but I think what's important is that folks know that we are not intentionally being silent about anything, and that was the hope for clarification in that [new] post was to say that we are here. We hear you speaking out. We're here to support and we don't want anyone to feel polarized or alienated or isolated and that wasn't the intent of the letter, and we're sorry that's how that felt in terms of everything going on in the world, but we're not sorry for writing the letter for Palestine, because that was what we, the membership, wanted to see, and that is what we wanted to deliver. And we would write another one for anything else — if that's what students want to see, that is our job."

When asked specifically about whether the date of the letter posted was a coincidence with the International Day of Holocaust Remembrance, the USSU executives confirmed that it was. "It just happened because that's when our social media coordinator was able to edit the recap video," Wintermute says. "The

coincidence is unfortunate, but that letter is not to say that we are anti-Jewish ... We are pro-Jewish students and pro-Palestinian students at the same time. That's not mutually exclusive."

Looking Forward

When asked about what plans the executives wanted to accomplish in the next few months, Wintermute and Hubick pointed to updating the Sexual Violence Policy. Deis said that next year's budget is set to arrive at the end of the winter term. "The important part that I want to focus on this year is being in the tunnel, being on social media, being online and telling students 'here's the budget, this is what we're doing, this is what we're changing, these are your fees, this is why they have to increase' ... We don't increase a fee without reason."

Jacob said that she is working on setting up for the USSU symposium, drafting a new Accessibility Plan for students and overseeing the nominations that students have given to their professors for Teaching Excellence Awards. The 2026 USSU Symposium is accepting submissions until Feb. 16 and will take place on Feb. 25.

In her closing remarks, Jacob said that "Especially considering [that] elections are coming up, if students aren't seeing something they want from us in the next three months, we encourage them to run. There is always room for growth in a student's union ... if [students] aren't seeing what they want [let] us know."

Wintermute adds that "[Universities are] known for [their] displays of advocacy ... Students are one of the most impactful [and] powerful groups. That is true across history. In any place, when students show up, they're a very important cohort of people. We're accountable to students at the end of the day. And I know that's something that we've really harped on, but I think [I speak] for all of us when I say that we're never intending it to be something where it's like, 'if you don't like what we're doing you can change it.' You can talk to us, and we will change what we are doing to respond to what students need."

The USSU general elections are expected to take place in the next few months. If students have any concerns or questions for the USSU executives, they are encouraged to reach out via email or in person at the USSU desk in Place Riel.



#FearTheGurt: Tearing the Lid off of USask's Varsity Yogurt Team

Revealing the culture behind the number one ranked Yogurt Team in North America.

Hannah Ha

USask has no shortage of talented, hardworking athletes on its rosters. Whether it's football, volleyball or track & field, the Huskies always make the turfs bleed green and white. But in the shadows of championship banners and Hardy Cups, a new sport is stirring up the competition.

Within mere months, the USask Varsity Yogurt team has grown a following of over 2000 fans across Instagram and TikTok, @usaskyogurt, with hundreds of thousands of views. They made their first post in October 2025, seemingly out of nowhere, catapulting them into the spotlight to their yogurt fans, whom they have endearingly dubbed the "Gurt Squad". These videos often feature yogurt reviews and blind guessing yogurt challenges, with Huskie locker rooms and running tracks as backdrops.

The team has had over 100 applicants sign up for their yogurt roster, no doubt eager to join the likes of their other "top yogurt recruits".

Despite the spotlight, the Yogurt Team has managed to keep a tight lid on their team operations. Undoubtedly, their mystique and allure have piqued the curiosity and intrigue of yogurt lovers all over campus. Who are they? What are they all about? Is yogurt now a verb or a noun?

I had the chance to sit down with three pillars of the USask Varsity Yogurt Team: Founder Keegan Colleaux, and two committed yogurt athletes, Ethan "Ethan B." Berardocco and Jacob "Bird" Baird. Ducking their heads under *The Sheaf's* office door, the three strolled in, donning their infamous Varsity Yogurt Team merchandise — white t-shirts with their classic yogurt cup logo on the top left, over the heart. Impossible to ignore, and equally impossible to get your hands on.

It all started from a dream Colleaux had one night. "I just had a dream about there being a yogurt team, legit. And then I told these guys, and they were really supportive in getting it off the ground."

The sport of "yogurt" has since reached new heights, expanding into an international Varsity Yogurt League, reminiscent of the Ivy League, and inspiring yogurt clubs all over. Students in Hudson Bay, McMaster, Dalhousie and even North Dakota have all been inspired to create their own varsity team, and the first Junior Varsity Yogurt Team popped up at Aden Bowman Collegiate.

The Yogurt Team spans across provinces in the case of Albertan athlete Berardocco, but it also has developed global reach. Baird is a recruit from Australia, who



USask Varsity Yogurt team members (L-R) Keegan Colleaux, Ethan Berardocco and Jacob Baird | USask's Varsity Yogurt Team

would like to make a special shoutout to Logan City, his hometown. Although he cannot get his favourite brand of Aussie yogurt, he has settled on tubs of raspberry Chobanis here in Saskatchewan. Baird is not even the only international recruit. The Varsity Yogurt team proudly boasts a recruit from Indonesia on their yogurt roster, who was one of their first applicants and is now leading the Jakarta Varsity Yogurt Team.

Colleaux is quick to preface that anything big has to be worked toward steadily, "Oikos wasn't built in a day." He advocates for starting small and not expecting huge results the first time around. As "professional yogurt athletes", Berardocco notes that many first-timers suffer from biting off more than they can chew. "Oikos Pro is a big danger in the community; it's a professional-tier yogurt."

Aside from consistency, flavour is another factor that can impact one's dairy performance. "Contrary to popular belief, plain vanilla is a difficult flavour." Berardocco instead suggests yogurt drinks or a strawberry banana flavor for beginners. Colleaux maintains that no matter what, it's most important to find what works for you and to pick what you enjoy. True in yogurt, and in life.

The process of becoming a "Yogurt Athlete" all starts with a simple Google form. Be prepared to be asked about your strengths and weaknesses, as well as your goals with the Yogurt Team. If applicants are looking to stand out in their applications, Colleaux mentions that video submissions and uniqueness have helped athletes like their newest recruit, Logan Kaban, get scouted. In terms of what the team looks for in a recruit, it's someone who shows that they want to work hard and can #FearTheGurt (a slogan coined by

yogurt athlete Ty Gilkes).

Even lactose-intolerant recruits are welcome on the team by Colleaux. "We'll take anyone, you just gotta be ready to deal with the consequences." The team believes that the ability to perform in spite of your lactose intolerance is the mark of a dedicated athlete. "If someone is willing to outwork it, that's a great sign. You know that they're fully committed."

"[#FearTheGurt] really brings our culture all together. Physically, you don't have to be afraid of yogurt. It can be intimidating for sure. But it's just more about the action of having that dog mentality when you are eating yogurt."

The team has pushed them beyond their personal limits as competitors. When discussing the biggest hurdles that they've overcome while on the team, the athletes could barely hold it together. "Jacob [Baird]'s was ... he would just miss his mouth." For Baird, being overambitious is apparently not exclusive to rookies. Colleaux recalls professional injuries obtained by trying to do too much, too soon. "His body was telling him no."

Many of the yogurt athletes are double-booked, also being committed to Huskie Athletics. When asked how they balance it all, none of them seemed phased by the challenge. Colleaux believes that one needs the other. "All the key features for yogurt are built on our volleyball training. The mindset, the mentality, the grit ... it's kinda reinforced every day. Volleyball has really helped us build the mentality for yogurt."

"You gotta make sacrifices, and I make that sacrifice with my sleep," Berardocco dutifully states. He believes yogurt to be more competitive of a commitment than

his Huskies contract, while Baird sees the two as an ability to "mix all our passions together". Two birds with one stone. Colleaux corrects me: "Two yogurts, one spoon."

Speaking of spoons, Baird's tried and true spoon is a plastic Ikea spoon, a product that he has trusted for the past 14 years. He believes them to be beginner-friendly, with less risk if one were to miss their mouth.

Each yogurt athlete has their own style. I asked the athletes to picture a small cup with a foil lid. The question is, are we detaching the lid all the way? Baird closes his eyes and mimes holding a small cup of yogurt. "It depends on the environment. So, for example, [on] bus rides, if I don't have a bin easily accessible, I will leave the tip of the lid attached. In the perfect, competitive environment, fully detached. Always."

Colleaux jumps in. "And that's been a point of conflict, because, I would say, my only personal rule is: fully detached. And I see him doing this, and I wanna kick him off the team right then and there."

Berardocco has other priorities. "The thing I will focus on is always licking the lid." At the mention of licking the lid, Colleaux hangs his head.

"My lowest moment, there was a video that we made where it was a yogurt review, and I didn't lick the lid. I was just caught up in the moment, and I forgot, and I felt terrible, 'cause that's just not what I do. That's not what we're about. And everyone saw that, and it was pretty controversial," Colleaux revealed.

Colleaux is lucky that the competition regulations are lax, according to Berardocco. "If you wanna fully clear it off, be my guest. But the USask Varsity Yogurt Team standard and our culture is: one lick is enough."

One thing they can all agree on is "if you lick the spoon clean, you don't have to wash it."

Dealing with all the new eyes on them, the guys recount how their lives have changed since the Varsity Yogurt Team took off. Baird admits: "We've turned into something of minor celebrities on campus."

Baird recalls how Berardocco recently signed his first autograph. He flips his phone around to show a screenshot: "Ethan" typed out in the Notes app.

Continued on page 14.

The Fog is Getting Thicker and Leon's Getting Larger!

How a Winnipeg band found themselves one prairie province over, in front of a sold-out USask crowd.

Hannah Ha

"It's nice to see that mosh culture kinda transcends. I knew it wasn't just a Winnipeg thing, but it's nice to see other prairie towns doing it."

In the aftermath of 441, bruises and cigarette butts became the mark of a good night. For those who missed out on January's concert, USask students brought the Louis' roof down and doubled the energy (and ticket sales) of last year's event. The UNICEF-organized cover band charity show saw lineups that wrapped around the Memorial Union Building, with Pabst Blue Ribbon in every hand.

The show featured the same three local bands that headlined the event last year, with one new addition: standout Manitoban band Leon's Getting Larger, covering Marianas Trench.

Leon's Getting Larger had the task of opening up the event and warming up the crowd. As soon as the first chord rang through the venue, murmurs bounced around in line. "Wait, are they already starting? No, damn it, is this the Marianas Trench Band?"

Over the course of their set, Leon's Getting Larger won over the crowd with their infectious energy, guitarist and vocalist Niko's high notes and especially drummer Luke Penner's smile from ear to ear through every single song.

Chatting with them backstage, we got into conversations about our Nissan Rogues, their friendship with local band blind commentary and the brutal blizzard they drove through to get to the show.

Past the formalities, I wanted to get to know the band behind the Marianas Trench setlist.

Niko Boticki: I'm Niko. I play guitar for Leon's Getting Larger, and I also do some of the singing.

Luke Penner: I'm Luke. I play drums for Leon's Getting Larger, and also do the rest of the singing.

Noah St-Hilaire: I'm Noah, and I play bass, and I don't sing.

Q: Still very respectable. The bass carries. So obviously, you guys aren't from Saskatchewan; you guys had told me backstage how blind commentary reached out to you. How did you end up playing 441?

Boticki: I guess our relationship with blind commentary started when we did our first tour. We got the recommendation from our friends in Living Hour (an indie-rock band from Winnipeg), and then we played with [blind commentary] in Regina. We were

supposed to play Saskatoon first, [but] that fell through and they were like, "oh, we'll come to Regina with you guys". And then we did a three hour drive after our show to sleep at Liam [Jones]'s (lead vocalist of blind commentary). And ever since then, we've been like really good friends.

Q: How did you guys end up with Mariana's Trench?

Boticki: I've been posting a lot of like things on my story with Marianas Trench as the background music semi-ironically, like somewhat for a joke. But also, I was a huge fan of Marianas Trench growing up. And I guess Liam [Jones] was also a big fan, and when he heard that 441 was happening again and they were maybe looking for another band from Winnipeg, He said, "Oh yeah, you guys should do Marianas Trench."

Penner: I feel like it was him specifically looking for a Winnipeg band to play Marianas Trench.

Boticki: Yeah. So then William [Kento] (of UNICEF) reached out to us [and] asked if we were interested [in playing], we said "for sure". At that point, we already started learning Marianas Trench.

Penner: You know, vocals-wise I don't wish we did more. Those are so hard. Yeah. Josh Ramsey (lead singer of Mariana's Trench) is a beast. I don't know how he does it.

It was fun because I got to watch Nico do like the hardcore frontman type thing, but singing Marianas Trench songs. He's always got a guitar in front of him, but he went whole hog into this frontman persona. Just fun to watch.

Q: Oh, so was this the first time you'd played Saskatoon?

Penner: Third.

Q: You can be honest. What's your favourite city that you've performed in?

Boticki: Saskatoon. Definitely, in full honesty, every show we've played there has just been an absolute blast. And it's also perfect that our friends in blind commentary live there.

Penner: Our home away from home.

Q: How would you guys describe your sound for people who've never heard your music?

St-Hilaire: If I'm talking to one of my neighbours in the elevator, I always try to see, "Do you know Modest Mouse?"

But, punk. A bit more punk. 'Cause if you tell a stranger, yeah, I play Midwest emo. They're like, "what the f*** is that?" They



Leon's Getting Larger | Facebook

hardly know what emo is.

Penner: There's no way to describe emo in a way that would get a stranger to want to listen to your band. You can use all the adjectives you want. You know, "jangle rock, emo revival, sad punk," none of it works. Oh, let's just call it "alternative". Yeah. Just a vague "alternative".

Q: No, but the thing is, when you use the right adjectives, the right crowd will be like, "Hmm, that's what I've been looking for." Maybe not the neighbour in the elevator. Maybe you just gotta play it for him. Then, what song of yours do you think best represents your sound?

Boticki: I think my first, my vote would be "Or Something" from our first EP.

I think that one kind of has the jangly parts that we like to do, but also there's a little bit of yelling in it. It gets loud, it gets quiet. It's dynamic, I think.

Penner: That's really fun to play at shows, too. I'd say "Oh The Places You'll Go" would be [mine], if I gotta show someone one song. Everything just came together: it's jangly, it's dynamic, extended instrumental break. That's what it's all about.

St-Hilaire: Definitely. Yeah, I feel like "Oh Places You'll Go" or "Antoine", it is also a pretty strong one. But I think Nico's right too with "Or Something", it shows a bit more of the energy that we tend to have on stage. And at a live show, it's closer to the energy that's gonna be there, and what you can expect out at one of our shows.

Penner: Making an emo song with a triplet feel or something. It's like shooting fish in

a barrel. It just always works. Like an Irish drinking song, almost.

Q: I was going to ask about your songwriting process as well. Who takes the reins on that? Is that like a collaborative thing, or how do you guys go about it?

Penner: It's pretty collaborative. We went through three bassists before Noah stepped up to the plate and really filled things out. By the time we had filtered through all these bassists, we had almost all the songs on the album written, they just didn't have bass parts. Noah came in and kind of, A) wrote bass parts, and B) just kind of reeled us in a little bit. You know, as far as the song doesn't have to be six minutes every time.

Boticki: This second album definitely, now that we have Noah part of it, it was all way more collaborative regarding lyrics. It's kind of 50-50. I think me and Luke complement each other that way, where Luke is really good with his metaphors and like he has a really poetic way of writing, and then I'm kind of probably more of the Modern Baseball, "this is what happened, I'm telling a story," kind of way. So together it really works out.

St-Hilaire: One thing I've realized that [other] bands don't really do, that I feel like we do a little bit differently, is that we'll write songs together. A lot of the other bands that I've talked to, one person will write a song: they'll write it at home, they'll write every single part in, on Guitar Pro or whatever. They'll just have it out, and then they'll write guitar, bass, drum parts and then they bring it to practice, and they all practice it together.

Continued on page 15.

No Final Form: On Slowness and Continuity in Braxton Garneau's Ebb

Material, movement and the choice to leave meaning unresolved



'Ebb' is a solo exhibition of new and recent work by artist Braxton Garneau | College Art Galleries | Carey Shaw

Laila Haider

Braxton Garneau's work begins with the materials he uses — where they come from, how they're handled and what they carry with them into the spaces they eventually occupy. In *Ebb*, the solo exhibition curated by Leah Taylor of Garneau's newest and most recent works, asphalt, raffia, cotton, linen, sugarcane pulp, bones and shells aren't just materials, but active participants in the dialogue between art and audience.

Garneau is a visual artist based out of Edmonton. He earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Alberta and has presented solo exhibitions in major art centres, including the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton (2024), Efraín López in New York (2024), GAVLAK in Los Angeles (2023), and Stride Gallery in Calgary (2021). His work has also been

included in significant group shows, such as *Land, Sea, Sugar, Salt: Terrestrial and Aquatic Contemplations of the Caribbean* at Remai Modern and *Black Every Day* at the Art Gallery of Alberta. In 2024, his piece "Pitch Lake (Pietà)" was acquired by the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego through the Northern Trust Purchase Prize at EXPO Chicago, and he received the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award. In Spring 2025, he completed a residency at the International Studio & Curatorial Program in Brooklyn.

While Garneau's presence in the art world continues to grow, his latest exhibition does not rely on it. Rather than feeling like a milestone, *Ebb* feels like a continuation.

Garneau's practice is shaped by working between cultures and histories. He pulls from classical and contemporary visual languages, sometimes referencing religious

or sculptural forms, complicated by the materials he uses — substances that are tied to land, labour and extraction. The result is work that feels familiar at first glance, then harder to place the longer you spend with it. He doesn't aim for polish or resolution. Instead, his work stays with the in-between — between materials, between traditions, between what feels finished and what still feels open.

A key idea in Garneau's practice is what he calls "material honesty." Rather than forcing materials into submission, he lets them behave as they want to. Fibres fray. Surfaces crack. Marks of handling remain visible upon presentation. There's a sense that the work is collaborating with the materials rather than mastering them. That openness carries through the exhibition as a whole — nothing feels overly resolved, and nothing insists on being read one way.

Garneau works in painting, sculpture, printmaking and installation, but these categories often overlap in practice. Materials are reused and shifted from one form to another, making it difficult to separate one medium from the next. Surfaces show signs of layering and handling, with the process left visible. Rather than aiming for a polished finish, the work remains open and unresolved.

The title *Ebb* points to cycles of movement and return, and that rhythm runs quietly through the show. Many of the works feel caught mid-shift, as though they could change again depending on where they're placed or who encounters them. That openness mirrors Garneau's interest in transformation as something constant and subtle, rather than dramatic. This sense of continuity — of things unfolding rather than concluding — means there isn't one clear takeaway waiting at the end. Nothing feels final. Instead, the exhibition feels like part of a longer conversation, one that doesn't stop when you leave the gallery.

A lot of Garneau's work focuses on costuming and adornment, which show up throughout the exhibition as a way of thinking about how bodies move through the world. Clothing, texture and surface become tools for navigating visibility, protection and belonging. Masquerade, in this context, doesn't appear to be about hiding — it's about becoming something else, even temporarily, in order to survive or adapt.

Garneau's use of natural materials grounds

these ideas further. Sugarcane pulp, bones and shells point to cycles of use and reuse, growth and decay. They also carry traces of systems that shape our lives — agriculture, mining, consumption — without spelling those connections out too neatly. The work leaves room for viewers to make those links themselves.

What stands out in *Ebb* is how physical it feels, how it resists a quick reading. These are pieces that ask you to come closer. Every minute detail contributes to the conversation at large. The meaning doesn't arrive all at once. In an era where consumption is evaluated based on speed rather than quality, its pace is refreshing. It asks for patience, for attention, for the kind of observance that happens when you're willing to stay a little longer than feels efficient.

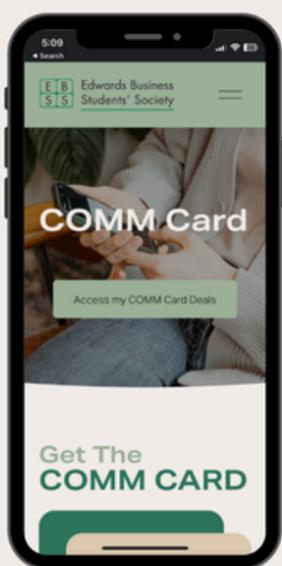
As you move through the gallery, it becomes clear that pacing is important to Garneau. The exhibition asks visitors to pay close attention to how materials shift under light, how textures repeat or change across works. It encourages viewers to spend time with uncertainty rather than rush towards an objective interpretation. That slower rhythm allows relationships between pieces to emerge gradually, reinforcing the sense that meaning here is cumulative, built through observation rather than delivered outright.

By the time you reach the end of the exhibition, there isn't a neat conclusion waiting for you. Instead, there are fragments: the weight and texture of certain materials, the feeling of surfaces that have been worked and reworked, the sense that the transformation is never quite finished. The pieces don't try to explain themselves away. They leave space for you to sit with it, to bring your own experiences into the room and to let the heart of the gallery reveal itself over time.

There's no rush here. *Ebb* asks for patience, curiosity and a willingness to stay with uncertainty a little longer. For those open to that kind of encounter, the exhibition offers something rare: not answers, but room to think — and to return. Not something to consume quickly, but something to move through, revisit and carry with you afterward.

Ebb is currently on view at College Art Gallery, and will remain on display until April 24, 2026.

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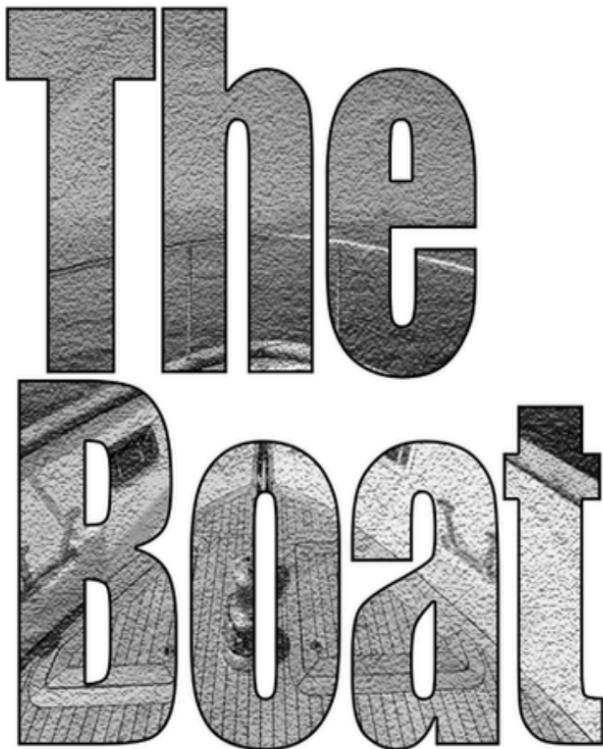
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A Clinic at Sea: The Boat Confronts Canada's Abortion History and Its Present

USask alumni bring Todd Devonshire's new historical drama to life, sparking conversation about reproductive rights, silence and the lessons history refuses to let us ignore.

**Canada 1964. Abortion is illegal.
But not on...**



A Todd Devonshire Play

Promotional poster for *The Boat*, written by Todd Devonshire.

Darshana Lanke

In the wake of renewed global debates around reproductive rights, Saskatchewan playwright and producer Todd Devonshire is inviting audiences to step aboard *The Boat* — a historical drama that feels urgently contemporary.

Set in the 1960s off the coast of Nova Scotia, *The Boat* follows two doctors, Carmen and Jane, who establish a floating clinic in international waters under a foreign flag where abortion is not a crime. Women travel to the vessel seeking a safe space to choose at a time when abortion in Canada remained heavily restricted. But Devonshire hints that not everyone who boards the boat is telling the truth.

The premise may be historical, but the spark behind the script was unmistakably modern. When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, Devonshire immediately began writing. The decision reverberated across North America, reigniting conversations about bodily autonomy and access to care — conversations that Devonshire believes Canadians cannot afford to treat as settled history.

“Canada and the sixties were a time of change in so many ways,” Devonshire says. “The pill, contraceptives and the fight for choice were at the heart of that change.” Placing the story in the 1960s allowed him to explore a moment when social movements, medical practice and

women’s rights were colliding in powerful and often painful ways.

Though the play is fiction, its foundation is meticulously researched. Devonshire, a history teacher, approached the project as both an artist and a scholar. “Teachers of history are also students of history,” he says. His research included a dissertation chronicling abortion in Canada from 1950 to 1990, drawing heavily on firsthand accounts from nurses on the front lines. The statistics were shocking, uncovering many heartbreaking stories. Many nurses defied restrictive laws to provide care, often at personal and professional risk.

According to the author of the dissertation, without those acts of defiance, abortion would not have been decriminalized in Canada in 1988. Devonshire remembers that moment clearly. He also remembers the fierce, polarized reactions that followed — reactions that, in some ways, have never truly dissipated.

That lingering polarization shapes *The Boat*. Devonshire positions it into an area of grey where there can be compassion, empathy and conversation.” Abortion, he emphasizes, is complex. It resists easy slogans and tidy moral categories. “Just when you think you know it all, a new scenario presents itself.”

Devonshire explained that the hardest part of writing was deciding which stories to include, given how many were “tragic, heartbreaking and deeply revealing.” He

ultimately cut one storyline because it felt overwhelming, though there were many others to draw from (The play includes a content warning, a reminder that this history is not abstract. It is visceral and deeply personal). Each character’s reason for being on the boat had to feel sincere, and he believes that sincerity carries through, particularly in the performances.

Honesty, he says, was the guiding principle. “The audience expects some respect for the truth.” When viewers trust what they are seeing, he believes, they can confront the central question the play poses: “What would you do if this were you?”

That question resonates powerfully in Saskatchewan. Although abortion is legal and decriminalized in Canada, access remains uneven, particularly in rural communities. Devonshire points out that one in four pregnancies in Canada ends in miscarriage, cases that require immediate medical care and often involve the same procedures used in abortion services. He goes on to mention how the infrastructure surrounding reproductive healthcare is fragile; funding shifts in cities like Saskatoon or Regina could significantly alter access.

For younger audiences, many of whom were born long after 1988, *The Boat* is both a history lesson and a warning. Rights achieved through struggle can be eroded through complacency. Devonshire recalls noticing something unsettling in a dissertation published after 2020: some nurses interviewed decades later chose to use only initials instead of full names. The stigma, it seemed, had not fully disappeared. The silence lingered.

Breaking that silence is one of the production’s core goals. The creative team will host After Show Talk Backs, offering audiences the opportunity to engage in conversation with Devonshire and director Liz Whitbread. The University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union President Emma Wintermute will moderate one of these discussions on Feb. 28.

The talkbacks are designed not as debates to be won, but as conversations to be had. Devonshire hopes they create space for nuance, a rarity in a discourse often dominated by absolutes.

The production itself is deeply rooted in Saskatchewan. The cast and crew are entirely Saskatchewan-based, with more than half being University of Saskatchewan graduates. For Devonshire, this was less a requirement than an opportunity. “When the talent is here, why not use it?” he says. “The talent in this

province is second to none.”

Elizabeth Nepjuk, who plays Dr. Carmen Grant, was drawn to the project both artistically and personally. Having worked on Devonshire’s previous history-based play, *Monday Night*, Nepjuk trusted his ability to handle sensitive subject matter with care. They also cite their strong beliefs in bodily autonomy, child welfare and universal healthcare as motivations for joining the production.

For Nepjuk, the role is personal. “My first-hand experience of abortion and the desire to make [abortion] a discussion that society has openly and with more knowledge.”

“The content is difficult,” she acknowledges, “but the task is rewarding.” The rehearsal room, they say, has been warm and supportive, filled with a group of artists committed to telling this story with integrity.

Independent theatre comes with challenges: limited resources, logistical hurdles and the constant need for community support. But it also carries a particular kind of passion. The artists involved in *The Boat* believe in the importance of the stories they are telling and in the audience’s capacity to engage with them thoughtfully.

Ultimately, Devonshire hopes readers approach the production with curiosity and sincerity. He understands that abortion is controversial and emotionally charged. He is not asking audiences to leave those emotions at the door. Instead, he invites them to bring those feelings into the theatre and sit with them.

“Maybe someone will walk away from the show and say, ‘Well, I never thought of that,’” he says.

In a time when history is often flattened into headlines and hashtags, *The Boat* insists on complexity. It reminds us that the rights and freedoms many Canadians take for granted were secured through struggle, courage and quiet acts of resistance. It suggests that ignoring history leaves us vulnerable to repeating it.

For USask students, many of whom are navigating their own questions about identity, autonomy and civic responsibility, *The Boat* offers more than a night at the theatre. It’s a reminder that history is not behind us; it’s watching what we do next. *The Boat* runs at The Refinery in Saskatoon from February 26 to March 8, 2026.

What We Hold: A Love Letter To Trinkets Past

Meera Margaret Singh's latest exhibition allows audiences to follow family histories through still lifes and physical objects

Laila Haider

In *What We Hold*, now on view at the College Art Gallery at the University of Saskatchewan, Toronto-based artist Meera Margaret Singh turns her attention to the quiet emotional lives of objects. Through a series of photographic still lifes and sculptural arrangements, the exhibition asks a deceptively simple question: what do we carry with us, and why?

The answer, Singh suggests, lies not in grand gestures but in the everyday. Books, shells, rocks, vessels, plants and inherited keepsakes populate the gallery space, arranged with deliberate care. These objects are drawn largely from the artist's own family history, yet the exhibition resists autobiography in a narrow sense. Instead, *What We Hold* treats objects as stand-ins for people and experiences, using material culture to trace relationships shaped by love, loss, migration and time.

Curated by Noa Bronstein, the exhibition is part of a national tour and arrives in Saskatoon following presentations at institutions including Gallery TPW and Evergreen Cultural Centre. Its placement within a university gallery context feels especially fitting. Singh's work is deeply informed by research and theory, but its emotional pull is immediate and accessible. Visitors do not need specialized knowledge to recognize the feeling of attachment embedded in a worn book or a carefully kept stone.

Photography plays a central role in the

exhibition, though not in the conventional sense of portraiture. In many of Singh's images, people are absent or only partially visible: a hand enters the frame, an arm reaches toward an object, a body is implied rather than shown. This restraint shifts attention away from individual identity and toward what remains when bodies are no longer present. The photographs become portraits by proxy, suggesting that objects can carry traces of the people who touched, kept or passed them on.

This idea is reinforced by Singh's interest in the photograph itself as a material object. Rather than treating photography as a purely visual medium, her work emphasizes tactility and intimacy. The images feel held rather than merely viewed, echoing the exhibition's broader concern with touch, care and preservation. In this way, *What We Hold* aligns with contemporary conversations about how images function as emotional artifacts, not just records of the past.

One of the exhibition's recurring themes is inheritance, framed not as a legal or financial transaction but as an emotional and ethical one. What do we choose to keep from those who came before us? What responsibilities come with holding these things? Singh does not offer clear answers. Instead, she creates a space where viewers can reflect on their own relationships to inherited objects, family memory and the weight of personal history.

That reflection is particularly resonant in a

cultural moment marked by constant circulation and disposability. In contrast to the speed of digital life, *What We Hold* insists on slowness. The objects in the gallery bear signs of time: wear, patina, careful repair. They ask to be looked at closely, considered not for their market value or aesthetic perfection but for the stories they quietly contain.

The exhibition also gestures toward intergenerational connection. In one photographic work, *Birds of a Feather* (2023), Singh and her son hold bird masks to their faces, facing one another rather than the camera. The image suggests play, care and mutual recognition, while also hinting at how identity is shaped relationally. It is a tender moment that encapsulates much of what the exhibition is doing: exploring how meaning is formed between people, often through shared objects and gestures.

Singh's background in anthropology and photography, as well as her role as an Associate Professor at Ontario College of Art & Design University, informs the intellectual rigour of the work. Yet *What We Hold* never feels didactic. Its power lies in its restraint. The exhibition trusts viewers to bring their own experiences into the space, to recognize themselves in the quiet accumulation of things.

Trinkets occupy a quiet but crucial role in *What We Hold*. Small, often overlooked, they sit at the intersection of intimacy and history. Anthropologically, trinkets have always mattered: amulets buried with the dead, beads traded across continents, charms carried for luck or protection. These objects rarely survive because of their material value. They survive because someone decided they were worth keeping. Singh's attention to modest, personal items places her work squarely within this long human tradition, where meaning is embedded not in grandeur but in repetition, care and touch.

From an anthropological perspective, trinkets function as evidence of how people once lived, loved, feared and hoped. Long after names and faces disappear, small objects remain to suggest patterns of belief and attachment. Singh's arrangements echo this logic. Her objects feel less like aesthetic choices than artifacts — fragments of lived systems of value. They imply that human history is not only written through monuments and archives, but through what individuals choose to tuck away in drawers, pockets and shelves.

Seen through this lens, *What We Hold* quietly invites a comparison with the present moment. Today's trinkets look different, but the impulse remains the same. Collectible figurines like Labubus or

Sonny Angels — whimsical, mass-produced and deeply personal — circulate widely, traded and displayed with care. They are often dismissed as frivolous or childish, yet their popularity suggests something more enduring: a desire for comfort, identity and belonging in object form. Like the shells, stones and keepsakes in Singh's work, these contemporary objects are held close not because they are rare, but because they feel meaningful.

If history continues far enough — if future artists, archaeologists or cultural historians sift through the remains of our time — it is not difficult to imagine these figurines resurfacing as clues.

A Sonny Angel tucked into a bookshelf, a Labubu carefully preserved in its box, might one day be read as evidence of how people sought softness, play and companionship in an era defined by speed and precarity. What we now see as trends could later be understood as emotional artifacts, revealing how individuals navigated uncertainty through collecting, displaying, and caring for small objects.

Singh's work does not romanticize this process, nor does it mock it. Instead, *What We Hold* situates the act of keeping within a longer human continuum. It suggests that the line between artifact and trinket is always temporary, drawn by time and perspective. What matters is not whether an object was meant to last, but whether it was loved, held and carried forward.

In this way, the exhibition subtly reframes how we think about material culture today. It asks us to consider which objects might speak for us when we no longer can, and what they might say about the values we lived by. Singh reminds us that history often survives in miniature — in the small, sentimental things that resist disposal. To hold something, the exhibition suggests, is already to imagine a future reader.

At the College Art Gallery, the exhibition unfolds with a sense of openness, allowing objects and images to breathe. Rather than overwhelming the viewer, the installation invites contemplation. The result is a show that lingers long after leaving the gallery, not because it demands attention, but because it mirrors something deeply familiar.

Ultimately, *What We Hold* is less about objects than about relationships — between people, across generations and through time. Singh reminds us that the things we keep are never neutral. They carry memory, care and responsibility. In holding them, we are also held by the histories they contain.

The exhibit will be on display until April 24. Bring your keychains with you.



Meera Margaret Singh, *Gentle Animals*, 2023 | Courtesy of the artist.

Ante Up

How Kalshi Wants to Turn Your Stress into a Moneyline

Nicolas Rock

When I was a kid in the late aughts, my elementary school had a gambling problem. Us students didn't recognize what was going on. We weren't gambling, and it wasn't a problem.

The story goes like this: In the second grade, every boy in my class was crazy about the Pokémon trading-card game, and all of us would play at every lunch hour. Eventually, we got tired of the same old routine and, to make things more interesting, someone suggested that we put our favourite cards on the line when we play. Since everybody could agree that the prospect of losing our prized Pokémon cards was less terrifying than the potential excitement of winning somebody else's, we were off to the proverbial races.

Fast-forward a few weeks, and some boys went home in tears after the school day, having lost every one of their favourite cards. My classmates and I didn't see a problem with this. Everybody knew the terms, and nobody was forcing anybody else to play. It was their fault if they lost, and even more so if they didn't know when to cut their losses.

Our teachers caught on to our little operation and summarily put an end to Pokémon cards in the classroom and schoolyard. At the time, we interpreted this response as obviously fascistic. However, time has allowed me to see that the parents of these kids who lost all their Pokémon cards by betting them in the schoolyard were no doubt horrified. These kids had wagered away the products that were once allowances and birthday gifts, thus the punishment of ceasing this activity of ours fit the crime.

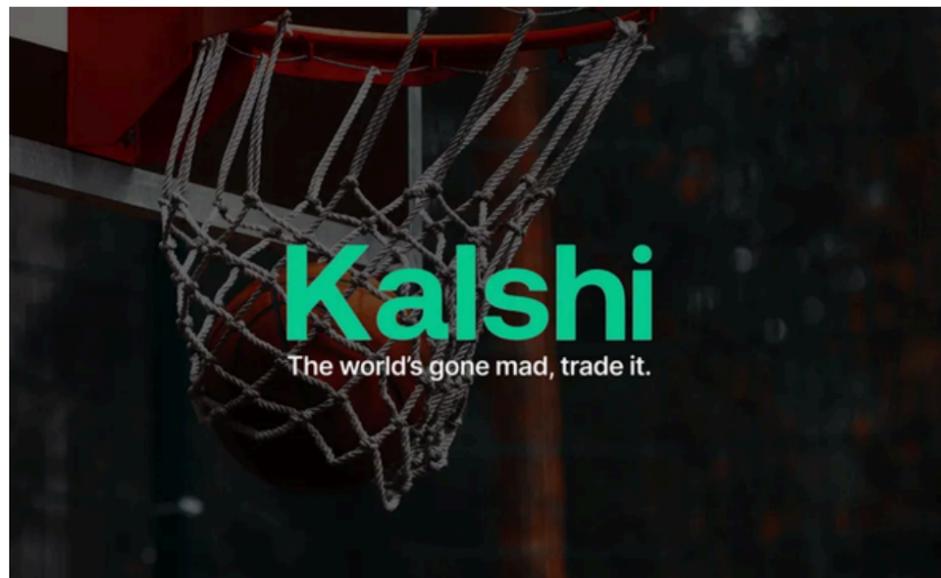
If somebody had sat our class down and articulated to us that what we were doing was gambling, and that some people are

naturally predisposed to having a harder time knowing when to call it quits, I doubt we would have completely understood the implications. With that said, however, it might have given my peers and I some skills with which we could better navigate parts of our modern landscape. This isn't to blame the teachers; how could they have known that two decades later, gambling would become so ubiquitous?

And this, I believe, speaks to a larger reality that we are all having to contend with: gambling is everywhere. Social media sites like X and Instagram are designed like VLTs, where users must pull their feeds down like a lever to refresh them. Video games offer users of any age the ability to gamble on in-game cosmetics, most often in exchange for real money. A picture taken at a Drake concert in early 2025 that shows concertgoers holding signs reading "please give me money to support my hospitalized mother" or "please help me buy my man a car" proves that even going to a concert can become a lottery. This is to say nothing regarding what has become of live sports broadcasting.

It's only natural that some industrious upstarts would seize on our moment by offering the people what they're so clearly asking for: the ability to bet on anything. Enter: Prediction Markets. In short, they're websites that allow anybody to place a wager on anything they can think of, primarily human interest stories.

In early December of 2025, CNN announced that they were partnering with the prediction market Kalshi to offer viewers live betting analysis on ongoing stories. In practice, it looks and sounds like the sort of betting analysis you're used to seeing for football games, only for the news instead. Kalshi has, somehow, managed to up the ante on the ubiquity of betting.



A promotional image from Kalshi's NBA advertisement campaign | Kalshi

If you take a look at the Kalshi FAQ, you will not see a single instance of the word gambling. Instead, they tell you that they are interested in "empowering" their users by "transforming [their] insights... about the future into tangible assets". The tactic that Kalshi employs of not addressing the elephant in the room is deceptively coldhearted. It's just a cog in the machine turning normal people into habit gamblers that lack the awareness to identify what a gambling problem looks like, much less if they have one.

It doesn't stop there. Kalshi also claims to be in the business of "turning differences of opinion into concrete action". They claim that they will declutter the world of opinions by implementing a structured market with clear winners and losers. In their words: "taking the chaos of the future and distilling it down to a single clean number — the price". To me, this reads more like telling anybody who is uncertain about the future that they can turn their anxiety into a reason to gamble. The implications get frightening when you realize that young people are reporting staggeringly high levels of anxiety.

A great way to sell to people is to convince

them that your product is the logical next step in a process they already partake in. The digital world is already filled to the brim with gamification, so it's easy to lead people who frequent digital landscapes into seeing betting as a natural evolution of the processes they already engage in. Kalshi, in partnering with CNN, is attempting to cast a wider net and make everybody who experiences anxiety see gambling as their logical next step. They are trying to reach everybody who still doesn't understand what they're doing with their Pokémon cards and manipulate them into paying for their stress.

My goal in writing this is not to admonish anybody for how they choose to spend their money, only to point out that maybe, for as natural a step as this seems to some, there is reason for pause at the implications of the Kalshi-CNN partnership. I hope, with naive optimism, that, as gambling becomes even more pervasive, resources for helping people with gambling problems become more accessible. Until then, keep your wits about you.

Remember: nobody gambles to lose, but the house never made money off the winners.

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Are we too online to be social anymore?

Learning how to log off and look up



Group of cheerful people using smart phones while walking in a row | Mango_Star Studio Getty Images | Canva Pro

Katherine Walcer

While you are commuting to classes, you will see a lot of people on campus with earbuds in, eyes down, thumbs moving. In the Murray Library line, outside the Arts Building, even in the hallways between classes where people used to stop and talk are now mostly drifting past each other like quiet planets with their own little orbits.

It's not that people here don't want friends either. It's not that we've all suddenly become anti-social or cold. If anything, most of us are craving connection more than ever. The weird part is that we're more connected online than any generation before us ... and yet it can still feel surprisingly lonely. So, are we too online to be social anymore?

Maybe the better question is: have we accidentally replaced being social with looking social?

USask is a campus built for the community. It's not a commuter-only vibe. People spend long stretches here with classes, labs, studying, eating, waiting out the cold and killing time between lectures. There are so many natural moments for social life to happen, and sometimes it does.

You'll still hear laughter spilling out of the bowl on a warm day, or see a group packed into a corner table in Place Riel. You'll still find people staying late in the PAC or running into friends in the tunnels like it's a little underground village. But the default campus setting now often feels quieter than it should.

A big part of that is simple: phones fill the

empty spaces. Waiting for class to start? Scroll. Sitting alone at lunch? Scroll. Walking back from the library? Scroll. That little "in-between" time used to be where you made acquaintances. You would chat with the person next to you. You'd make a joke in class. You'd complain about the wind and somehow end up talking for ten minutes.

Now, even if you want to talk, it's harder to tell if someone else does because everyone looks busy. The most universal "do not disturb" sign on campus is a screen. So let's be fair, being online isn't the villain. It's actually how a lot of students survive university.

Group chats keep you afloat when you miss a lecture or don't understand a lab instruction. Discord servers turn intimidating classes into shared problem-solving. Instagram and TikTok can make you feel like you belong somewhere, especially if you're new to Saskatoon, new to USask or just trying to find people who get you.

For some students, online spaces are the safest social spaces. If you're shy, anxious, neurodivergent or just exhausted, it can be easier to start a friendship in DMs than in person. There's time to think. There's less pressure. You can leave the conversation without feeling awkward.

But sometimes online life quietly stops being a tool and starts becoming a main event. The campus becomes a place you attend physically while your real social life happens somewhere else, on TikTok, on private stories, in comments, in streaks and notifications that never end, and that's where things start to get strange. An online

connection is not the same as being known.

There's a specific kind of awkwardness that feels more common now, and that's wanting to talk to someone, but not knowing how to enter their bubble. If you message someone, you can test the waters. You can send a meme. You can reply to a story. You can keep it casual.

In person, it feels riskier. There's fear of interrupting. The fear they'll think you're weird, the fear of saying the wrong thing, and it'll linger in your memory for three months like an unskippable cutscene. So we don't take the risk. Instead, we choose the safer option of waiting for someone else to break the ice, and if no one else does, we scroll.

That's not a character flaw. It's a learned behaviour. Being online trains us to curate ourselves. To present a version of our personality that's edited and filtered and timed correctly. In real life, there's no draft button. Real life includes pauses, stumbles and moments where you realize halfway through a sentence that you don't actually know what you meant. That can be scary, especially in an environment so high-pressure as university, where so many students already feel like they are failing in at least one area of life at any given time.

There's also a subtle shift happening where sometimes it feels like we've focused more on documenting our lives than living them. You go to a Huskies game, and half the crowd is on their phone. You hang out with friends, and there's a moment where everyone goes quiet, not because you're out of things to say, but because everyone is checking something. You go out for coffee, and the table looks like a small electronics store. It's not evil, it's a habit and a reflex.

But presence is a kind of generosity toward other people and towards yourself. And when you're always half present, social life becomes thinner. Conversations stay surface-level. Moments don't stretch out.

If you're a USask student, you already know their schedule struggles. People are juggling work, classes, labs, studying, family stuff and sometimes just trying to keep themselves emotionally upright.

When life is that packed, phones become the easiest form of downtime. Scrolling is "rest" that requires zero planning and zero vulnerability. It's comfortable with no chance of rejection.

So ... are we too online? Sometimes yes, not because the internet is ruining us, but because constant connectivity can crowd out the awkward, slow, slightly uncomfortable moments that real social life needs to grow.

But here's the hopeful part: this isn't permanent. It's not a doomed generation thing. Social skills are not "gone," they're just out of practice.

And USask is honestly a great place to practice, because there are built-in opportunities everywhere. If we treat them like opportunities instead of background noise. Being "less online" doesn't have to mean deleting everything or becoming a person who journals in a cabin and makes sourdough (Although a select few of us would adore that idea, given the right circumstances).

It can be small, almost unremarkable choices like saying hi to the person you sit beside twice a week, even if it feels awkward the first time. Staying an extra five minutes after class to chat instead of speed walking out with your head down.

E

ven putting your phone face down on the table when you're with someone you actually like.

None of these guarantees aren't best friends. But it increases the odds of connection, and connection is often just odds plus courage.

We're not too online because we don't care, we are too online because it's easy. Because it's everywhere, and because real connection asks something of us: attention, vulnerability and a willingness to be a little cringe in public.

University is one of the last places in life where you're surrounded by potential friends your age, all in the same space, all going through similar stress, all trying to become their best selves.

So maybe the question is whether we're too online to be social anymore. Maybe it's whether we're willing to choose real life on purpose often enough that it starts to feel natural again.

And maybe that starts at USask with something simple. Look up. Smile. Say hi. Someone else has been waiting for that, too.

@sheafteam on



@usasksheaf on



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Record Scratch

A Different Take on Intentional Listening and the Vinyl Revival

Nicolas Rock

The front page of The Sheaf Publishing Society’s January 2026 issue is home to an article titled “Spinning Back to Ourselves: Why Vinyl’s return matters for university students and our mental health,” authored by Katherine Walcer. The article is passionate and very well articulated. It makes a compelling argument for how listening to vinyl LPs could be a boon for university students, as it offers an intentional and ritualistic way to connect with ourselves and our interests, free from digital distraction. I commend Walcer for writing this article and recommend that you take time out of your busy day to read it. It speaks to the moment and how important it is for young people to fight against being controlled, monitored and drained by digital environments that are negative for their mental health.

I can’t help but recognize, however, some personal disagreements with premises articulated therein. My disagreements with the article are as follows: It conflates vinyl listening with intentional listening, and it doesn’t see the idea of intentional listening to its true conclusion. I would like to offer a friendly and spirited rebuttal to The Sheaf readers with the hope of providing a slightly diverging perspective on intentional music listening and its benefits for university students.

I’d like to start by doubling down on what I think is the most important aspect of Walcer’s article, namely the benefits of intentional listening. Social media environments are built by making choices for the user based on how an algorithm thinks the user behaves. This creates a space where users are fed more content than they find, and leads to an eventual disillusionment and identity crisis. The user has a hard time distinguishing between what the algorithm thinks they like and what they actually enjoy. Walcer deftly identifies and, correctly, points to intentional listening as the cure, musically speaking. By choosing to buy a record, taking it home and listening to it, you are making a conscious choice to dictate your time on your own terms. I think that is an altogether positive thing.

The problem lies in the purchasing of the record itself. A look back to 1984 reveals that pop records of the time cost roughly \$10 pre-tax. If you adjust this figure for inflation, it shows that a Canadian music listener was paying what amounts to about \$26 today for a vinyl copy of Purple Rain 42 years ago. Now, as popular as Prince might still be, Walcer points to a few examples of albums that have become the Gen Z “vinyl staples”: Arctic Monkeys’ AM and Taylor Swift’s Midnights. Looking at the catalogue of the large Canadian LP retailer Sunrise, we find that both AM and Midnights are selling for \$42.99 pre-tax in 2026, a 65 per cent price markup from the 1984 pop counterpart.

Walcer claims at the end of her article that the vinyl revival is a “revival of ourselves” as music listeners, but I believe it has very little to do with the vinyl: the real revival is in intentional listening, no matter the format.

It is true that the LP format lends itself better to intentional listening than CDs, given that there are no skips, no fast forwards and no pausing. Saying that you need a vinyl copy of an album to intentionally listen to it, however, has the unintended side-effect of putting the experience behind a paywall — a paywall that has been marked up 65 per cent over the last half-century. That is also to say nothing of the barrier to entry for LPs. An entry-level turntable that won’t mangle your records can cost up to \$300, and then you still need speakers or headphones. It’s a lot to ask of young people in our economy who want to reclaim their habits.

I believe that the act that matters is sitting down and listening to music without distraction. Whether that’s via CD, MP3, vinyl, cassette, gramophone, whatever it may be, you’ll get the benefits of ritual and disconnection. I think that all the warmth of vinyl is lovely and indeed very human, but amounts to an expensive quirk of the medium. Cassettes, for instance, are rife with warping, warmth and humanity (see their penchant for random self-destruction) and are generally available for a fraction of the price.

While intentional listening is a fantastic thing, the real benefits come when we decide to forgo modern music listening habits completely. If you want to really reap the benefits of having a taste in music, and moreover listening to music in general, I recommend cancelling your streaming service of choice. This is a choice I made in mid-2025, and I can guarantee you that if you are a music lover, no matter how annoying it might initially be, the benefits are innumerable.

I’ve found that, now that I don’t use Spotify, every piece of music I listen to feels more imbued with a sense of purpose. I see myself in all the music I listen to, whether MP3, CD or LP, because there is no algorithm dictating anything for me, and I’ve chosen everything myself. Sure, I don’t get to send people links to songs they might enjoy, but the feeling of telling somebody about a piece of music that I took time out of my day to enjoy is far more gratifying.

This disconnect from Spotify is actually what led me to start looking at the vinyl industry as a cash-grab because it becomes completely unrealistic to spend \$42.99 CAD (or more!) on every record you want to hear but don’t already own. It also means that I can enjoy intentional listening anywhere, not only in my basement next to my turntable. I can say that this has done wonders for my mental



Author’s own record collection | Nicolas Rock

health, and I hope that everybody who reads this and is serious about wanting to reclaim ownership over their taste gives it thought.

Maybe I’m splitting hairs here, and maybe it isn’t that serious. That said, I think that this article, as a response to Walcer’s piece, is in the spirit of what both of us are trying to communicate about intentionally appreciating things. I think the fastest-acting cure to the sort of general malaise that social media and algorithms engender is choosing where to spend your attention. Purposefully taking time out of your day to do something and thereby reclaiming your agency in a world that seems to thrive on

you throwing away your attention for someone’s bottom line.

So go buy that record if you’ve got the cash, but remember that even if you don’t, you can still appreciate all the benefits of caring about what you listen to, read or watch; it just takes a little discomfort. Katherine Walcer, if you’re reading this, I look forward to your next article. For what it’s worth, I recommend checking out Ryuichi Sakamoto’s final piano album, *Opus*, as I’ve been spending a lot of time with it recently. If you’re interested in the vinyl copy, though, I would wait until the used prices go down a bit.



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Sorry Not Sorry for My Opinion

How the pressure to be likable is ruining honest and productive conversations

Emily Mainprize

We all want to be liked and to “fit in” within a group. It’s a natural part of our psychology. We crave to have people around to lean on when we fall and to join us in the highs, but what happens when we push our own beliefs and interests to the side just to maintain these friendships? What if the societal pressure to be polite and relatable to the people around us is ruining honest conversations?

We live in the age of “good vibes only,” where being agreeable is often treated as a moral virtue and being disliked, even briefly, feels like a personal failure. From workplaces to friendships to public discourse, there’s an unspoken rule humming beneath our conversations: Don’t rock the boat. Don’t be awkward. Don’t be the person people don’t like.

The result? Conversations that are smoother, nicer and far less honest than they need to be.

Being likable used to be a social advantage. Today, it can feel like a requirement. Performance reviews hinge on “culture fit.” Social media rewards palatability over nuance. Even in personal relationships, we’re encouraged to be low maintenance, easygoing and chill.

In many environments, especially professional ones, the cost of being disliked feels high. Speaking plainly can be mistaken for being difficult. Disagreeing can be framed as negativity. Asking uncomfortable questions risks being labelled “not a team player.”

So people adapt. They soften their language, hedge their opinions and stay silent when they shouldn’t. Not because they don’t care, but because they care too much about how they’re perceived.

There’s a crucial difference between being respectful and being likable, but we often blur the two.

Respect says: “I’ll be honest with you, and I’ll treat you like someone capable of hearing the truth.”

Likeability says: “I’ll make sure you feel comfortable, even if that means not saying what actually needs to be said.”

When likeability wins, feedback becomes vague. Disagreements become passive-aggressive. Problems get discussed everywhere except where they could actually be solved. We replace clarity with courtesy theatre, lots of smiles, lots of “just circling back,” very little substance.

Ironically, this doesn’t prevent conflict. It just delays it until it shows up as resentment, burnout or sudden blowups that seem to come out of nowhere.

When people constantly edit themselves to remain likable, conversations lose their edge, as well as their usefulness.

Teams stop innovating because risky ideas might sound stupid. Friends stop being honest because they don’t want to seem judgmental. Important issues get danced around with euphemisms and disclaimers until no one is quite sure what anyone actually thinks.

Over time, this self-censorship erodes trust. People sense when others are holding back. They may not know what is being withheld, but they can feel the gap. Conversations start to feel shallow, scripted or emotionally unsatisfying.

And perhaps most damaging of all, people begin to disconnect from their own instincts. When you’re always asking, “Will this make me unlikable?” before you ask, “Is this true?” you slowly stop trusting your voice.

Part of the problem is that many of us were never taught how to have direct conversations without being cruel. So we conflate honesty with harshness and assume the only alternatives are silence or blunt force.

We are taught to be polite and not shake the boat with the sacrifice of being honest and standing up for the things we believe in.

But honesty doesn’t require aggression. It



Team idea generation | Veii Rehanne Martinez from sparklestroke | Canva Pro

requires clarity.

“You missed the deadline, and it affected the team,” is not mean.

“I don’t agree, and here’s why,” is not a personal attack.

“This isn’t working for me,” is not a betrayal.

Discomfort isn’t the same thing as harm. Productive conversations often feel awkward in the moment because they challenge assumptions, expose tension or ask for change. Avoiding that discomfort doesn’t make relationships healthier; it makes them more fragile.

The pressure to be likable doesn’t fall evenly on everyone. Women, BIPOC people, younger employees and marginalized groups are often penalized more harshly for being direct and speaking up in difficult conversations. What’s labelled “confident” in one person becomes “abrasive” in another.

This creates a double bind: speak honestly and risk social consequences, or stay silent and absorb the cost internally. Over time, that silence turns into disengagement or exit.

Organizations and communities then wonder why people seem unmotivated or why problems persist despite endless “open dialogue.” The truth is, dialogue isn’t open if honesty is punished.

Letting go of the need to be universally likable doesn’t mean becoming careless or confrontational. It means recalibrating priorities.

It means valuing being understood over being approved of. It means trusting that healthy relationships can withstand a little friction. It means accepting that not everyone will like you, and that this is not a crisis.

The most meaningful conversations are rarely the smoothest ones. They involve pauses, clarifications and moments where someone says, “That’s uncomfortable, but important.” They require courage, not just to speak, but to listen without defensiveness.

If we want more honest and productive conversations, we need to normalize a few things: that disagreement is not disrespectful, clarity is kinder than confusion and being momentarily unlikable is often the price of being truthful.

A culture obsessed with likeability may feel pleasant on the surface, but underneath, it’s brittle. Real connection between colleagues, friends and communities comes from the willingness to be seen clearly, not just favourably.

And sometimes, the most generous thing you can do in a conversation is risk not being liked, in service of something far more valuable: the truth.

USask’s Varsity Yogurt Team

Continued from page 6.



The athletes express great gratitude toward their Gurt Squad. Baird speaks fondly: “The yogurt community has grown to be really big. Whether they’re on the team or not, we really appreciate everyone.”

No squad works without its leader. Baird

reflects on Colleaux’s leadership in this journey. “I really can’t speak highly enough of Keegan [Colleaux] as a leader ... as a person, you know, and as a member of the Yogurt Team. He really is the best of us, and he’s really done so much to give us all these opportunities.”

Colleaux humbly hopes to inspire others who dream of going out and starting something of their own. “Put yourself out there and chase your dreams. Sometimes a random thing will be bigger than it should be. Go for ‘gurt.’”

CROSSWORD

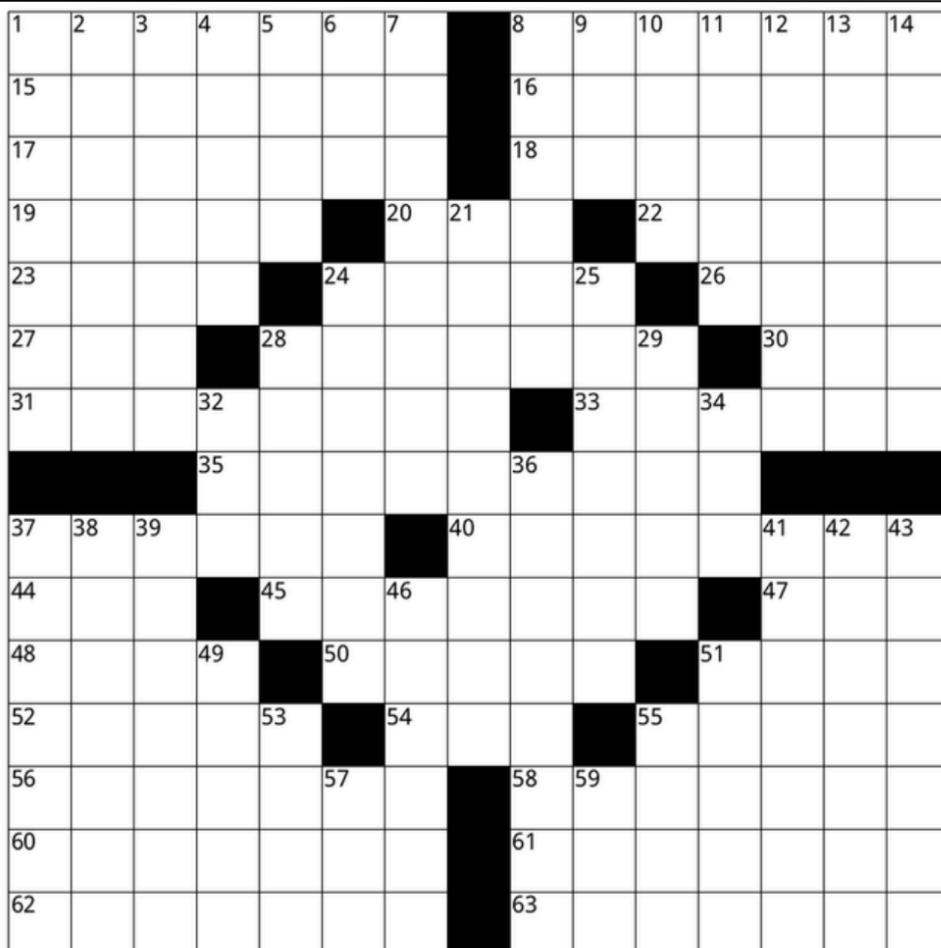
Across

1. More unpleasant (to the senses)
8. Mine west of Saskatoon owned by 1 down
15. Functional (var.)
16. Poppy in Madrid
17. Relating to heat
18. More faithful
19. Gives stars to
20. Soul to Macron
22. Mine east of Saskatoon owned by 1 down
23. With sharp resolution (2 words)
24. Persona non _____
26. Adventurous archaeologist Croft
27. Arrivals posting
28. Followers of the Vatican
30. Norse god of war
31. Fertilizer produced by 1 down
33. Like Bill Weasley to the other siblings
35. 1 down has retail offices in Canada, the US, Brazil and this country
37. Parade
40. Elephant-like beast in Lord of the Rings and Dungeons & Dragons
44. Always poetically
45. Delegates
47. "Obviously!"
48. Coup d' _____
50. Turbine part
51. _____ on (spoil)
52. Super _____
54. P.I. in slang
55. Number of countries that 1 down exports to
56. Famous Rio neighbourhood of song
58. Presidents or Prime Ministers to name a couple

60. Rule in soccer (2 words)
61. Female newcomer
62. Like some garden figures
63. Anticipate

Down

1. Big daddy of Saskatoon
2. Singer-songwriter married to Nelly
3. "Look!" (2 words)
4. Calibrated, like a scale
5. Some early PCs
6. Quarterback Manning
7. Cover the floor again
8. Some car parkers
9. Latin lover's word
10. "Glee" actress Rivera
11. Ore fragment
12. Collect and put in order, as document pages
13. Children of "Dragon" and Marty Supreme actor Kevin
14. Knitted blanket or crocheted scarf, for example (2 words)
21. Major highway (2 words)
24. Joke writer
25. Artist's studio
28. Animal shelter
29. One does this on a banana peel, perhaps
32. Royal Agricultural University for short
34. Bit of Morse code
36. Not the treble version (2 words)
37. Slogan of 1 down "_____ the future"
38. Take some pressure off (3 words)
39. Indigenous group from the southern Great Plains



Answers will be posted at thesheaf.com next week

Crossword | Greta Mader Stevens

41. Devoted fans
42. Pecan or almond for example (2 words)
43. Apt. anagram for "the eyes" (2 words)
46. Salt that is mined by 1 down
49. Coffee break time for many (2 words)
51. Caravan maker
53. Italian artist Guido
55. Equitable
57. Hosp. workers
59. Angsty music genre

Leon's Getting Larger

Continued from page 7.



Leon's Getting Larger | Facebook

One of us will come to our practice. "I have this idea, let's see if we can figure something out." And then we just go from there and try to write songs from that, which arguably takes longer. But I think it's definitely a lot more fun and rewarding when you can come up with something together.

Boticki: It's kind of cool to have all the different influences, especially with Noah part of the band, and Noah used to play in a metal band. Especially when we're going into this heavier direction. It was kind of great to have all three of us be able to really hone this in.

Q: Especially having all your different influences, what would you guys say are some of your strongest influences, personally? Or guilty pleasures, whatever?

Boticki: I think we all really got into Title Fight in the last two years, so that's definitely been a main one lately. But I think what kind of really started the band was [when] Luke lent me a record from Tiny Moving Parts. They're a Midwest emo band, and that was the first time I really heard a sound like that. All my previous experience was more mainstream stuff, like Modern Baseball and Prince Daddy and Mom Jeans. So now hearing

this kind of sound, it was a bit more intricate guitar playing and just like very energetic. I think that's kind of the sound that Leon's was born on. And then moving from that to Title Fight. And then also we've been kind of slowly dabbling in Shoegaze, so bands like Hum.

Q: And what about new music? I heard you're working on a new project?

Penner: It's gonna be just, I don't know, it's heavier. You know, we take some risks. There's a hardcore breakdown at one point. I don't know, lyrically we're more honest this time around. Just more upfront, you know? It's got an eight-minute song too, so that's gonna be fun.

Q: When can fans expect that? Unless this is on the DL?

Boticki: We're looking to put it out around the summer. I think July is kind of what we're thinking of.

Q: How did you guys all meet, by the way? Were you friends in high school and you went from there?

Boticki: No, funnily enough, me and Luke went to the same high school, but I didn't even know Luke existed until we were

both out of high school. I had this friend who was talking about starting a post-punk band, and he said, "Just meet at my friend's basement." And he ended up being like an hour late. And so that gave me and Luke enough time in this awkward first-time meeting situation, where we just kind of met and then haven't looked back since. And then me and Noah met at work. I knew he played bass for a really long time.

And then I think about his second shift into working with me, our bass player at the time just dropped out. And so I asked Noah, "Hey, do you wanna be part of my band?" And he is like, "Sure, okay." What else do you say to someone you've only worked with twice before? And then he was late to practice.

Penner: Nico and I also did our first meet-up on the day Rico Casek from The Cars died. Yeah. So maybe that's like a, that's like an omen or something.

Q: Passing the torch or something.

Boticki: Yeah. Where one life stops, a new one begins.

Penner: Move over, The Cars, Leon's Getting Larger is here!

USSU BACKPAGE



USSU Elections

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Learn more about the executive portfolios

March 2 4pm Roy Romanow Student Council Chamber

MANDATORY PROCEDURES MEETING

March 5 4:30pm Roy Romanow Student Council Chamber

For more information visit ussu.ca/elections



Women's Wellness

Every Other Monday at 5PM
Women's Centre, MUB 103

ASKATUNE LIVE AT LOUIS'

Name Tunes WIN PRIZES Wednesdays at 7:30 PM



International

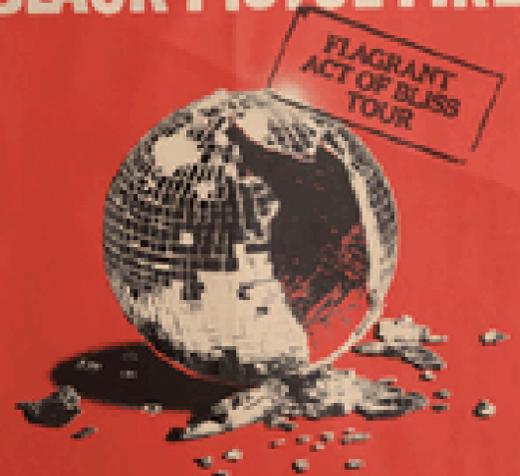
Women's Day Market

in the Arts Tunnel



10:00am - 4:00pm
Monday, March 9th

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