

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 11 Issue 12
March 19, 2003

The Popstar Experience

Conclusion of a behind the scenes
look at Popstars: The One

First national forum on Post Sec Education

Sandra Moore reports

Bookcrossing, Bottled Gifts, and Workplace Equality

FICTION SPECIAL

The conclusion of
Forgotten Promise

Plus: Canadian FedWatch!, Flicks and
Folios and news, announcements and
opportunities from your university and
beyond.

THE VOICE

March 19, 2003

Volume 11, Issue 12

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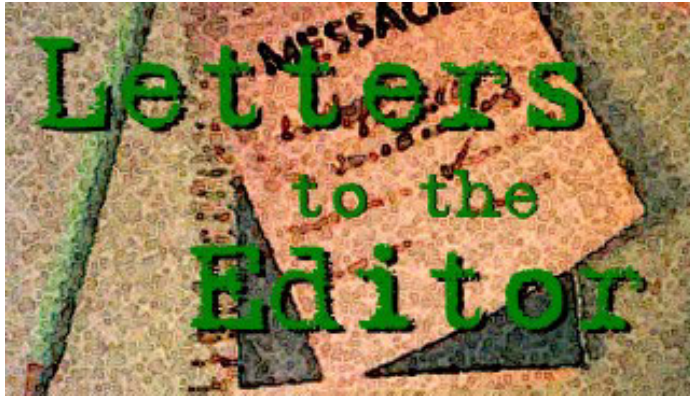
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CLASSIFIEDS!



We love to hear from you!

Please continue providing your opinions, comments and ideas; any submissions can be sent to voice@ausu.org.

Please indicate if we may publish your letter.

Quote of the Week:

**For every prohibition you create you also create
an underground.**

Jello Biafra

Musician; Spoken Word Artist; Politician.

THE VOICE

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University's *The Insider* for its
frequent contributions

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EDITORIAL PAGES

This week:

News From AU: Tuition increase, Edmonton Playwright to write an AU course, new AU governing council member and VPFA and more...

AUSU's Sandra Moore covers the **First National Forum on Post Secondary Education** in Winnipeg. Read the highlights of this four day conference and learn AU had to add to the discussion.

The Popstar Experience by Debbie Jabbour. Read the conclusion this week.

A multitude of opinions [almost] on the proposed new AU extension policy, in **Sounding Off**.

I am still seeking comments for the upcoming **Pets and Peeves** column. Tell me what you love, and what you hate. Send in a favourite joke, a link to a great website, or anything at all....

AU TUITION INCREASES

On March 5 AU academic council met to discuss the new AU budget [for more information, read News From AU in this issue]. As expected the university has determined that it must increase tuition in order to meet rising expenses. The higher tuition rates are meant to cover a shortfall that is said to stem from a combination of an estimated ten percent registration growth in the coming year, offset by only a two percent increase in government funding.

The result is a tuition increase of 7.32% – raising it from \$381 from \$355-plus a \$19 increase to books and materials fees, which will bring your total payable, including alumnae and student union fees, to \$541.00 per undergrad course for Alberta students.

This number is even more startling when you compare it to the 1998/99 rate of \$372.00, an increase of about 45% in 5 years.

AU insists that there is no other way to make ends meet, and offers some palliatives to the numbers. We are told, for example, that the new books and materials fee in fact brings the rate to a cost recovery basis. However, we are not told how this rate applies to different courses or faculties, and if it is being increased due to an inordinately high rate in some courses.

This could be the case. For example, many of the COMP courses [specifically COMP 200] do not come with any materials at all – not one text book or reader – but just a link to use the course manual and study guide online. Surely those materials are quite cheap to produce, and the materials fee is therefore excessive. Other courses, however, come with a great bundle of books, many of them pricey hard-covers, but the materials fee is the same.

AU is quick to point out that they are still taking a loss on the costs of the intellectual property fees incurred in creating materials, and certainly it does cost quite a bit to have professors write and design courses, but isn't this something that is included in the costs of any university? To me, the time spent on creating study guide materials is commensurate with the time a professor in a regular university spends preparing lectures and classroom handouts. It is an integral part of the job. Also, the more students who take a course, the lower the cost per student will be, since the same materials are used over and over. Given that AU has one of the largest student populations in Canada, they must have many courses that have massive enrolment, which would therefore offset much of the materials creation fees. Using online materials in these cases would render the materials fees almost non-existent.

Besides, I have also noted over the past 5 years that I am getting fewer and fewer books with my courses, which makes the value somewhat less than it once was. Often, textbooks seem to be discontinued in favour of AU produced course readers, and individual books are replaced with large compilations, as I have noted in some of the English courses. I don't mind reading a poem or short passage in a Norton Anthology type reader, but I suspect I'm not the only one who finds it impossible to read the book length passages from those semi-transparent, onion skin pages with the smudgy 6 point font.

In most of my English courses I have had to go out and purchase a number of the works in cheap pocket book format anyway.

Also, given that books fees are included, and AU indicates that they have in the past taken a loss on books, I cannot help but wonder if professors often find they are forced to select fewer, or lower quality texts for their courses in order to keep costs low. Admittedly, in a regular university where the student must carry all of the text book costs, some tutors might conversely become overzealous in their materials selection and place an undue financial burden on the student. I'm not sure if there is a happy middle ground for this situation.

Another sugar-coating offered by AU is the assurance that the increase in tuition still leaves us paying the lowest tuition rates in Alberta.

This may be true, but it assumes that you only look at tuition, and do not take into account varying book fees. It is true that at the U of Calgary, Alberta or Lethbridge, you have to pay a significant amount on books for all courses, but that amount does vary greatly and you can somewhat control your book costs by ascertaining which courses are particularly costly on books before enrolling. If you still can't afford books, you have the option – and I know students who have done this – of not buying the books, but using copies from the university library instead.

With items of restricted circulation this can mean a lot of long hours in the library and it's certainly not convenient, but it *is* an option. Alternately, you may also choose to purchase second-hand books from the book resellers on the library campus. You can even share books with another student in the same program for trade books back and forth with other students in your faculty. In other cases, you may buy only some of the required books, and rely on libraries or friends for those you are missing. There are a number of ways to avoid paying for books in a traditional university, although I admit it is much more convenient to have your own copies of those books.

Realistically, with tuition skyrocketing many students have no choice but to forgo convenience and instead may choose to make other sacrifices – such as increased library dependency – so that they can continue their educations. The number of options is as varied as the number of students

at AU. I, for example, live in a two student household; My husband also attends Athabasca University. While the two of us are taking different degrees with different majors, and our courses seldom overlap, we have over the course of our time at AU taken courses that the other has already completed. In these cases we've had to pay for two full sets of textbooks and materials, with no opportunity to return the second set.

The materials fee is what makes the most difference, and it can work in your favour, or to your detriment depending on your situation. To compare, the tuition for a single course at the U of Calgary, including fees, is \$488.50, at the U of Lethbridge it's \$474.59 and at the U of Alberta it is \$477.20. In all three of these schools, the fees level off as you take more courses per semester, effectively reducing the per course costs for full time students by up to \$40 per course [at the U of L].

By these standards, AU still comes out on top if you take into account book fees for the average course, but on a course by course basis some AU courses with few books may cost the most of all, and for those students who would forgo buying books to save extra money, AU is by far the most expensive.

I realize that it is not entirely AU's fault – in fact the extremely low provincial funding they receive is has necessitated the raise in tuition more than anything else. However, by forcing AU students to purchase books whether they need them or not made place an undue financial burden on the very poorest students who are otherwise accustomed to sacrificing book ownership to save money and buy more courses.

There are also the smaller hidden costs to go along with attending a somewhat less known university. For example, I was recently pricing the Microsoft Office software package, which is required for a number of AU courses. The university of Calgary, being a very prominent university in this country, has acquired a special deal whereby their students, and only their students, can purchase the software package for only \$130.00. AU students, however, must pay the more common academic rate of \$310.00 for the same software through the AU Bookstore. I don't think I'm the only student at AU who has had to forgo certain courses because I cannot afford the software.

Similarly, the course fees at the other major universities come with some bonuses, such as athletic facility membership and health and dental insurance programs. These are benefits that AU students lack, and areas where the university saves. I won't even get into the dramatic savings made by AU for not having to maintain a massive building and hundreds of classrooms.

I should point out however that I do understand some of the rationale behind AU making students purchase course materials. AU's materials are not simply textbooks; they take the place of lectures, and other in class teaching methods. It might be very difficult for a student to succeed in an AU course without the study guide and student manual, and these materials cannot be bought anywhere else or borrowed from libraries. However, as anyone who has taken a number of AU courses knows, the amount of material contained in these guides varies greatly. Some are little more than assignment manuals, while others contain a significant amount of teaching material.

Besides, textbooks are part of the non-negotiable course materials fees, and it would be nice to have an option should we have the textbooks, have a source for second hand copies, or wish to use library copies. It is also imperative if we are to have to pay for these textbooks and receive them through the university, that they be of the highest quality. I do not feel particularly fortunate

to receive a single anthology in the place of a number of low cost pocket books which would many cases be easier to read. This is a personal preference, but one that I could more easily exercise at another university.

Mostly, my reaction to the new increase in tuition is a great sadness. Every year I see my degree slip farther and farther away, and the new rates are so high that I'm not sure when I'll be able to afford a new course. Student loans have not been increased by any significant amount since I started in 1998, despite that 45% increase – what am I supposed to do?

.... And before you mention it, I've already considered dropping a flaming bag of dog poop on Ralph Klein's doorstep, but I can't afford the gas to Edmonton either...

Tamra Ross Low
Editor in Chief

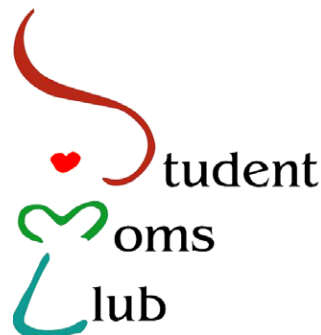
NOTE: Am I the only one who totally hates the new AU Bookstore web page? You used to be able to see pictures of items on the main page, but now you have to click into each one. This is not an improvement... and it's ugly! I sure miss the old website. It seems that the AU website is being systematically dismantled and some of the best pages are being downgraded or removed. It now takes me forever to find that wonderful registry services page where I can look up my course registrations and end dates. I'd like to know if students think that the recent 'improvements' to www.athabascau.ca are of benefit to you.

Voice Contest

The Voice is going through some changes. Soon the website will be updated and more new content will be introduced. In order to make the new Voice everything that you want it to be, we need your input.

As a thank you for taking the time to comment, we'll enter everyone who fills out our entry before the end of March into a draw for an AUSU T-shirt. Only AU students are eligible for this prize.

THE ENTRY FORM CAN BE FOUND HERE:
http://www.ausu.org/voice/contest_form.html



AU STUDENT MOMS CLUB

The Student Mom's Club of Athabasca University is now online and ready for new members.

As the SMC front page welcome message attests, this club is:

LESS ACADEMIC ! MORE FANTASTIC !!

SMC is dedicated to bringing together student moms across Canada to share study and parenting tips, easy quick recipes, articles and essays about childrearing and education, and much more.

SMC has a forum on the AUSU server, and a website at:
<http://www.ausu.org/clubs/index.php>

You must log in to access the list of groups and clubs, but any AU student with an account on the AUSU website can access and club page.

For more information on the SMC, contact Momo @ smc@ausu.org or visit their website. Everyone is welcome.



Last week we asked readers to send us their feelings on the new Proposed AU tuition policy [see last week's Over Extended for more information – v11 i11, March 12, 2003].

The topic for next week is:

Rising tuition rates: Do you still feel that under the new tuition rates you are getting a better deal at AU [see Editorial and News from AU for more information]?

I just wanted to express my concern over the proposed course extension policy. Since I get student loan funding, my course contracts are four months long, but I can get a two-month extension if I need it. I typically enroll 4 or 5 courses at a time, and then I work on one course at a time, allowing about a month for each one. For the fourth course of my four-month term, that means I'm just starting the course a month before the contract date. If I'm just starting the course, how am I supposed to know at that time whether I will need an extension? I always give AU as much notice as possible when I require an extension, but this is ridiculous. If a time period must be imposed, ten or fifteen days would be more appropriate.

Heather Wrigley

AU's proposed extension policy, while not without its drawbacks, will not likely affect my present or future studies. I cannot see this policy making AU any less "open concept" either. The fact is that your average university will not even allow you to extend a course beyond its set semester, and the only way to move an exam is with a doctors note or in case of a death of immediate family.

The only fault I can see in the AU policy is that there is not provision for rescheduling of exams due to extenuating circumstances. Upon proof of "extenuating circumstances" a student should be allowed to reschedule exam. From my understanding of AU policy, you can, in fact, write supplemental exams upon failure of the first. I figure that missing the exam would be the same as failing it.

Personally, while acknowledging that everyone runs different lives, I have always known more than a month before whether I am on track to finishing my courses, and if by chance something comes up I did not expect, it has always required just a bit more buckling down to get it done.

If AU and its students want to stand side by side in the same category as traditional institutions in the field of academic integrity and respect then they should be careful not to over liberalize their delivery system that is already one of the most liberal in the country.

Trevor Siwak

Athabasca University is all about flexibility. We attend this university because we have complex lives and multiple responsibilities. Where is the flexibility when students are asked to plan their lives a month in advance? I would hazard a guess that most students are like me, working like mad to finish their course on time, and hoping right up to the last minute that they will succeed (and I'm sure most of them do). I have finished countless courses in the last week of the month, knowing that I have that safety net of an extension if I need it. If the university finds that most students are seeking extensions during the last four days of the month, they should accept that this is the reality of the AU student experience - and seek ways to accommodate it.

Debbie Jabbour

There has been a lot of discussion on this issue. Below is a sample of other comments from AU students:

- Many students who request extensions do so to gain some extra time to complete an assignment or to study for the exam. AU students, for the most part, have much more complex lifestyles, responsibilities, and commitments than the typical on-campus university student, and the need for flexibility is crucial.
- This requires students to schedule an extension well before they would even have to schedule a final exam. For students without access to the learning centres, this could prove an additional unneeded cost -- they may have to purchase the extension simply because they are unsure if they will be able to get an invigilator in time.
- “I made arrangements to write exams in Andrew, but these fell through and I later had to travel to Edmonton. I am lucky that it is only 125 km to AU in Edmonton”. Otherwise a last minute extension would have been needed or the course would have been lost.
- This shortens the amount of time students on student loans have to raise the \$127. Considering their financial state to begin with, this can prove to be an extreme hardship.
- “Athabasca University Students are already severely disadvantaged by the Student Loan System (as it requires two semesters of 4 months back to back for standard full time courses, yet some AU courses are designed to use the full six months, and AU has imposed a limit of only 6 open courses at a time.) This would further increase those difficulties by forcing students to extend courses that they may not have needed to otherwise -- yet the extension could put them over the 6 course limit were they to try and continue full time studies. (eg, a student opts to take 4 courses in each semester, but finds that the first semester load is taking longer than expected.. now the student would have to schedule well in advance of the contract date that the courses would be open for another 2 months. Given AU's total open course limit, the student may be precluded from continuing full time studies, even if later he found that was able to complete some of the courses before the 4 months are up.)”

[Ed. Many AU students may not be aware that the time limit for completion is reduced to four months if you are on student loans.]

- This completely eliminates the ability for extensions to be used in case of family or personal difficulties -- thus disadvantaging those students that may have certain conditions. (And often there is a correlation between having to take student loans and having conditions that make life difficult).
- “I have actually dropped courses because of personal commitments and health. If I had to give 30 days notice, I could not have been a student with AU at that time.”
- “I've extended many courses, and always tried hard to finish them right up until the end.”
- Two Council members have experienced problems with migraines/severe headaches that required last minute postponement of exams & requiring purchase of an extension.
- “I always decided in the last few days if I can't finish. I realize this is hard for the school, but they should just be prepared for it.”
- The university already has online forms for extensions, could not other parts be automated to reduce work?

- “If the reality is that students are extending in the last 4 days, why not accept that and work with it instead of trying to force students to do something different? Obviously most students try right till the end to finish a course (I know I do), and cannot possibly predict a month in advance whether they will be able to do so.”
- “Sometimes you may think that you will be able to finish the course in a month, but unexpected circumstances pop up, even if they aren’t emergencies. I can see maybe 15 days notice, but expecting students to predict their events of the next month of their life is ridiculous.”
- The excuse that the current policy causes too much paperwork around the end of the month is not valid. Won’t changing it to 30 days notice just move the paperwork to the beginning of the month?

It seems most people extend last minute because something unexpected occurs. In many universities you can't extend courses [unless they are project courses], but many people attend AU because of commitments or life issues that make going to a regular university impossible.

A lot of the extensions I have used have been due to getting migraines during exam week. I cannot predict these, and they last for days. It hurts to pay the extension fee just so I can reschedule my exam [do not be deceived, extensions are not a favour, we pay dearly for them – almost 1/3 of tuition for 1/3 more time and no extra materials], but I sure appreciate the option. The 30 day deadline means I could no longer use an extension when I need it most. Ditto for a mother whose child gets sick.. Granted a woman with small children or a person with chronic migraine might find it very hard to attend a traditional U, but that's why we have AU!

I am thankful every day for the great experience and quality education I am getting from AU, but this new policy will make it a lot harder. What bothers me, is that the university didn't even attempt to tell students that they were having troubles with late extensions, so there was no way we could try to change our habits! I wish they would recognize that we can sometimes be part of the solution.

Editor

For next week's Sounding Off, send me your thoughts on the following topic:

Rising tuition rates: Do you still feel that under the new tuition rates you are getting a better deal at AU [see Editorial and News from AU for more information]?



**A new
pacemaker implant
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Visit our web site www.heartandstroke.ca



VIEWS FROM THE FIRST NATIONAL FORUM ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

By Sandra Moore

From March 11th to the 14th, 2003 I had the opportunity to be a part of the first ever National Forum On Post-Secondary Education hosted by the University of Manitoba's Student Union (UMSU) in Winnipeg. 45 student delegates from all across Canada came to represent their various colleges, technical institutes, and universities in an attempt to learn more about current and future issues facing post-secondary education in Canada.



The importance of the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) attending this event was immense. Since we represent 27,000 students all across Canada, becoming more aware of individual provincial and federal post-secondary educational issues is important to AUSU. The objective for this forum was to establish post-secondary education (PSE) as a high national priority. UMSU brought in a diverse group of speakers; after each set of speakers the student delegates were assigned to discussion groups where further discussion took place and a brief synopsis of the important issues was compiled. These synopses were presented to the media in a closing plenary session.

The achievements attained at this Forum will be used to educate future student leaders and stakeholders of PSE in Canada and measure set benchmarks for future reference. This will be accomplished by publishing a final report, similar to the white papers recently released by the federal government. The Forum report will serve as a strategic plane for the nation's student leaders for the next several years, and will be used extensively in lobbying campaigns and during anticipated provincial and federal elections this upcoming year.

(taken from the National Forum on Post-Secondary Education Executive Summary, 2003: <http://www.umsu.org/nationalforum/summary.html>).

The forum started out on the evening of Tuesday the 11th with a wine and cheese reception. This was an opportunity to meet and greet other delegates as well as receive a welcome from the Mayor of Winnipeg and the President of the University of Manitoba.

The next two days were dedicated to information and discussion of the following topics:

1. Post Secondary Education as a National Priority – Guest Speakers Pat Rowantree, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and Training for the Province of Manitoba, attempted to address the following points in regards to PSE as a National Priority:
 - ❑ Accessibility
 - ❑ Federal vs. Provincial Funding
 - ❑ Public Accountability
 - ❑ Canadian Council on PSE
 - ❑ Redundancy

Ms. Rowantree gave delegates a background into the PSE institutions offered in Manitoba as well as a brief discussion regarding the University and College of the North that will soon be operating in Northern Manitoba.

She also stated that her province spent 350 million on PSE. She believes that the Federal governments should give educational money to the provinces, all the while respecting their autonomy as a provincial jurisdiction. The federal government, according to Rowantree, should not make educational decisions for the entire country because one size does not fit all. What is important in New Brunswick is not necessarily important in other provinces. She continued on to say the Federal government does not always invest wisely in education, using the feds 100 million dollar national database of research as an example. The provinces, she said, would have been able to come up with a more logical and useful way to spend the money.

She also firmly believes in the concept of laddering, where credentials can be increased gradually. For example, in 15 months you can obtain a child care certificate, another year of schooling will give you a diploma, and an additional year will give you a degree. This allows people to enter and exit programs with ease. This concept also recognizes that people do not only make 1 educational decision in their lives – in reality they make many - and it also adheres to the government's commitment to life-long learning.

Later in the day topic 2 was discussed.

2. Covering the cost of PSE.

- ❑ Tuition
- ❑ Loans
- ❑ Private Money
- ❑ Accessibility vs. Quality vs. Excellence
- ❑ Government Responsibility

Ron Daniels, Dean of Law at the University of Toronto, was the first to speak on this topic. He compared the quality of education in the United States to that of Canada. Canada currently contributes approximately \$15,000 per student annually while the US contributes \$30,000. He also gave examples of the class sizes affecting universities in the States, which average 1 professor to 17 students, to class sizes in Canada, where 1 professor is in charge of 28 students. Professors in the US are paid on average for an entry-level position \$150-160,000 Canadian per year, while Canadian entry-level professors are only offered \$100,000 yearly. This huge salary chasm between Canada and US post secondary teaching positions, Daniels believes is leaving us with a shortage of professors due to large numbers emigrating to the States, and he also believes that students from the States are receiving a far superior education than Canadians. In order to improve the PSE of Canadians a significant increase in resources needs to be achieved, not just by governments but by students and alumni.

Daniels introduced a system at the U of T law department where students pay a substantial amount for yearly tuition, \$14,000 (in 1997 law students at the U of T were paying \$2,000 a year!) in order to subsidize those academically capable of entering law school who lack the finances. In 1995 no students were going law school tuition free, now almost 10 years later there are 40 students attending under this program. To me this concept is absurd - a \$12,000 increase in tuition yearly per student to send 40 students to school tuition free. I'm not in commerce but I can figure out that it doesn't seem right to force students to pay an exorbitant increase to fund a small number of students otherwise unable to attend. Daniel's theory, to me, all boiled down to the notion that students of privilege should pay more to go into careers of privilege, and to justify it, we'll let unprivileged students in tuition-free; someone needs to take careers in financial aid. And lawyers wonder where they get their bad reputations from?

Following Mr. Daniels was Ron Herron, Member of Parliament for the Fundy-Royal area (New Brunswick). Mr. Herron is a known advocate in Parliament for increasing the accessibility of PSE to all. It is his mission to make PSE a principal plank of the federal economic agenda. Herron spoke of a need for a Federal Education Minister with a student group perspective to interact with provincial education ministers. Mr. Herron was received warmly by the audience when he further suggested that the parental contribution on student loan forms should be drastically adjusted. A family making \$55,000 a year is expected to contribute \$9,000 a year to their child's education, not taking into consideration that the Canada Student Loan program has not been modified

since 1995 to accommodate cost of living increases. He stressed that student groups should be focusing their lobbying on why PSE is a priority. We as students and parents know why, but what are the repercussions to the average Joe if a PSE becomes attainable only by the elite who are able to keep up with the rising costs.

The second day of discussions started with topic 3:

3. Changing the Delivery of Education

- ❑ Life-Long Learning
- ❑ Learning While Earning
- ❑ Prior Learning Assessment
- ❑ Apprenticing
- ❑ Distance Education

This discussion started with Diane McGifford, Minister of Advanced Education and Training for the Province of Manitoba. In her opening remarks Ms. Gifford called our university a college and welcomed her co-speaker, our own Dr. Judith Hughes, as Judith Grant. It is comical to note that again at the end of the discussion, after Dr. Hughes was introduced and gave her presentation, Ms. McGifford once again addressed Dr. Hughes as Judith Grant. Ms. McGifford, in my opinion, did not seem very informed about the topic she was speaking on. She commented in monotone that we do have to reinvent the wheel in order to keep up with the today's technology by expanding training in new and innovative ways. Her speech seemed to closely resemble that of the previous day's speaker Pat Rowantree.

Read next week for more coverage of the First National Forum on Post Secondary Education, including the presentation by AU's VP External Relations, Judith Hughes.

Sandra Moore is an AUSU councillor, the head of the groups and clubs committee, a mother of two, and a full time AU psychology major. Somehow she finds time to also write for The voice.

ATTENTION PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS



Every Monday from 9:30 - 10:30 AM MST and Wednesday from 7-8 PM MST the Athabasca University Psychology Students' Society gets together to chat about issues pertaining to the world of psychology at AU.

To Join the chat, go to the AUPSS website, accessible through: <http://www.ausu.org/clubs/index.php> [you must be logged in to AUSU] and select the discussion forum link, from there click on Psychology at the top written in blue and choose the General Psychology Chat. NOTE: You need to be registered in a psychology course to access the AU psych discussions.

Hope to see you there!

Sandra Moore

Athabasca University Psychology Students' Society

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE THE POPSTAR EXPERIENCE: Conclusion

By Debbie Jabbour



The conclusion of a continuing series about the Canadian Television talent competition, Popstars: The One.

For part one of this series, see: The Voice, January 29, 2003 [11-04]

As the evening wore on, I jumped every time the phone rang, worried that it might be Amaya with another “missed plane” story. Fortunately no call came, and close to midnight we headed to the airport to pick her up. As we waited in the receiving area of the airport’s lower level, we amused ourselves by crowd-watching and speculating on who people were waiting for. One young man was holding an enormous balloon greeting, and he paced back and forth in front of the escalator, practicing his welcome smile. We created a scenario that had him waiting for a long-lost girlfriend who was finally coming home, and he was going to pop the question. An older man, formally dressed, also waited by the stairs, carrying a sign with a name on it. We decided that he was involved in a hot Internet romance, awaiting the first meeting with someone he had fallen in love with online.

As the minutes ticked by, our speculations became even more bizarre as we constructed life stories for each of those waiting. Finally the plane arrived and passengers began to flow down the escalator. A young woman with two small children in tow was embraced by the balloon-holding man, and they headed for the luggage carousel - so much for the long-lost girlfriend story! In the crowd rush that followed we lost sight of the “Internet romance guy.” Gradually the flow of passengers down the stairs slowed...and still no Amaya. We were trying not to panic when finally she came into sight, loaded down with bags - her red curls all askew under a cowboy hat, with a wide smile on her face. As we enveloped her in a group hug, full of relief that she was home; all the excitement, tension and worry of the past week brought tears to my eyes. It had only been a week but it had seemed so much longer!

For the first few days, Amaya seemed a bit disoriented as she became settled again after the experience. The confidentiality agreement she was under prevented us from discussing it with anyone, and since we had no way of knowing what part of the whole thing would be televised, we pretty much left the topic on the shelf until the show began to air in January.

Soon after her return, though, a newly-inspired Amaya decided it was time to actively start pursuing her music dreams. She placed several ads in local musician’s magazines and soon the phone was ringing off the hook. It became quite overwhelming for a while, on some days she’d have two and three meetings or auditions booked. She took advantage of every opportunity to jam or perform as a guest with different bands. Finally she found her niche with a group of players with compatible musical tastes and goals and settled into a regular rehearsal schedule. They are currently working hard to perfect their musical repertoire (a mix of covers and originals), and are working on a demo CD. They haven’t yet decided on a name, although they did jokingly toss around the idea of calling themselves “Amaya and the Popstars!”

There have been many other positives from the experience. Amaya has become a bit of a neighbourhood celebrity, with people recognizing her and making encouraging comments. Most have complained that watching the show gave them no sense of how she can sing or perform, and they are disappointed that they didn't get to see more of her on the show. Edmonton Journal writer, Liane Faulder, did an interview with the Edmonton finalists, and later told me that her interview with Amaya was the best of the whole group, and that it was a real pleasure talking to her.

The Edmonton Journal also had an interview with fellow Edmonton Popstar finalist Bernard, on March 8, 2003. Bernard was cut from the show right after Amaya, and it was interesting to read some of the things he said, since they coincided so closely with Amaya's experience. In particular, his comments about Michael Geddes confirmed that Lone Eagle were rather callous in their attitude toward the young people involved. According to Bernard, "I don't think he cared for any of us. He was all about his show. I can't think of anything good to say about him" (ed, 2003). Bernard also commented that all that mattered was capturing the camera moments that would boost ratings, saying that "you waived all your moral rights when you joined up with the show...if it's emotional and it's good TV, they're going to air it, regardless of how you feel." He added, "It's not a talent show, that's for sure."

In retrospect, watching the first eight episodes, it becomes clear that both Bernard & Amaya were correct in their assessment. Because the show was edited long after all the cuts had been made, this gave the producers the chance to do some creative editing; showing the positive performance aspects of those they were grooming to be among the final twelve, while highlighting segments that were controversial or really bad of those they had cut, in order to justify their actions. This part of it was disappointing to Amaya, since she was very proud of many elements of her performance through the week, yet she commented that they showed none of these. I can't help but wonder if the difficulties surrounding her missed flight might have resulted in much of her positive footage ending up on Lone Eagle's "cutting room floor."

Bernard also commented on the off-camera rumour that one of the contestants was a "plant" from the production company, pre-selected to be the winner. This seems to be supported on the Popstars discussion board, where it has been revealed that one contestant has family connections to the marketing manager of a major Canadian record company. For those who truly believe in the "reality" of reality TV, this may be surprising, but after our experience with Popstars, it seems perfectly logical to me. Lone Eagle is investing a fair amount of money in marketing "The One," and Michael Geddes will be doing whatever is necessary to ensure that the person chosen will reflect the wishes of his production company. He is not interested in promoting young talent and giving them opportunities - he's in this to generate maximum profit. The "viewer votes" will mean nothing if they don't agree with the winner Lone Eagle has chosen to promote. The previous winning Popstar groups were abandoned the moment they ceased becoming financially profitable, and there is no reason to believe that "The One" will not suffer the same fate. It's a fickle, cutthroat business and producers will stop at nothing to market their human "product" successfully.

Writer Leonard Stern discussed this very issue in a recent Edmonton Journal editorial, writing about Russian pop duo Tatu; two young girls who were recruited at the age of 14, and who are now being "pimped" as part of what Stern calls the music world's "pedophiliac pop" (Stern, 2003). Stern makes some insightful observations regarding the exploitation of young entertainers, particularly manufactured popstars like Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera and Tatu. These young women are using overt sexuality to sell records (quite successfully), and he wonders whether they will eventually emerge damaged from the experience. He comments that we've "seen in Michael Jackson what can happen to child performers when they grow up - and remember, the young Michael was made only to dance and sing, not commit sexual acts or innuendo."

When weighing both the positives and the negatives surrounding the Popstar experience, both Amaya and I agree that while it was quite the learning opportunity for all of us, we are glad it turned out as it did. While she could have played the game and gone much further, it would have required that she conform to something

contrary to what she believes in, and it would have left her subject to becoming a commodity owned and manipulated by Michael Geddes and Lone Eagle Entertainment. She was reluctant going into the whole thing in the first place because of this, and from the start intended to only take away the parts of the experience that would allow her to grow and develop in her own direction. I believe Amaya has already started to take the positives and turn them into something that will allow her to move forward in her own way. Her time will come, and she will succeed by remaining true to herself and her music.

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Stern, L (2003). "Pedophilic pop" taints music world: Russian duo's lesbian act a new low in marketing, and an insult to gays. Edmonton Journal, Opinion. March 17, 2003.

Tatu. <http://www.tatugirls.com/>

Debbie is a native Edmontonian, and a single parent with four daughters. She has worked as a professional musician for most of her life, and has enjoyed a rich variety of life experiences - with many more to come! Debbie is working towards an eventual doctorate in psychology, and currently serves as the president of the Athabasca University Students Union.



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BOTTLED UP

By Lonita Fraser



If you're like many of the rest of us, your cupboards and storage areas are full of empty jars. Whenever the original contents are gone, we clean the jars out and put them away thinking we'll find a use for them "one of these days". The jars pile up until there are more jars than uses we can think to put them to. Until now. Why not make them into gifts? Not empty, of course, unless you know someone else who wants a collection of empty glass bottles that once held pasta sauce, peanut butter, and mayonnaise. An empty jar is not a terribly interesting thing, so why not put something inside and treat a friend, loved one, co-worker, or other individual, to a nice surprise? But what to put inside, you ask, and how do I make this "gift in a jar"?

If you know someone who keeps a journal, or who likes to write other types of poetry and prose, then the answer of what to put inside is simple - fill the jar with slips of paper, each bearing one idea for something to write about. What you put on the paper could be questions, quotations, or anything else of your devising. Each day, or as often as they are inclined to, the person you gave this "journal jar" to would take one out and write something inspired by what's on the paper. The questions and quotations could be thematic. If you are giving it as a Christmas gift, for example, the questions could all be things relating to Christmas or other holidays - or they could simply be a random selection of questions covering any amount of topics you wish. What occasion you give the gift for, and what you put on those slips of paper, is completely up to you, but I shall list some ideas for you later on. First, though, let me go through some of the tools you'll need, and some ideas on preparation.

The first thing you'll need, of course, is a jar (or other suitable container). You can either purchase one new from a store (dollar stores are excellent places to find such things) or recycle one from your home. Any type of jar will work, but you might want to use one that has designs on the glass or is made from something other than plain, clear glass. Make sure the jar is thoroughly cleaned before you get started - including the lid - and that there is no evidence left of the paper label or glue that was used to apply it. An easy way to help remove the label and glue is to soak the jar in warm water for a while, then scrape the dissolving paper and loosening glue off. You can use a Brillo pad, or something else with a bit of abrasiveness, to help you with this.

You will need paper. Coloured paper is an excellent choice that can help to provide some pizzazz, or you can use white paper - it's up to you. Another idea might be to use paper that has a pattern already on it. Access to a printer (if it's a colour printer, so much the better) will make the job of decorating much easier, as you can keep the text and other decorations more uniform - and it certainly saves you from the potential of writer's cramp!

The idea here is to decorate one side of the paper and put your writing prompts on the other. You would then fold the papers in half so that the written side can't be seen until the paper is taken out of the jar, and all the person you gave the jar to can see beforehand is the decorations. If you were, for example, making a jar that contained sets of questions about family life, school, the holidays, etc., you could decorate all the holiday prompts with the same decoration and choose a different decoration for other themes. You could decorate each piece of paper differently, also. The other option is to use paper that has a peel-off sticky back, so that when the person you give the jar to takes the slip of paper out, they can affix it to the top of a page in their journal. In this case you might decorate one half of the surface the prompt is written on, and write the question on the other half.

Using a printer would allow you to make the sizes of the slips uniform. You could measure out the size of the slips on the computer using the appropriate software, then print them out in large sheets that you could cut apart

yourself. Although it's not necessary, you could use pinking shears, or other scissors that have a special edge, to cut apart the slips of paper so that your prompts have a decorated edge. If you are using the "decorations on one side, writing on the other side" method, simply print out one side first, flip the paper over feeding it back into your printer, and print out the other side. Make sure the dimensions you set for the size of your slips has remained the same for both sides, or you might end up cutting something off.

You will also want to disguise the lid and perhaps decorate the outside of the jar. To do this you could use peel-off sticky paper, cloth, paint, or any combination of those and other craft items. If using paint to colour over the original lid and on the glass, you will need special paints for the process. Your best option would be to consult someone at an art supply or craft store, and ask them what is best to use to paint on metal and glass. The same applies if you're going to glue things onto the lid or the sides of the jar.

For the lid you could simply cover it with a piece of cloth, perhaps one that matches the colours of paper you used, or matches the designs you put on your prompts. You could affix it with glue, ribbon, yarn, or an appropriate elastic - like those sparkly ones you use for your hair. You could paint any sort of design on it you wished, or glue sparkles and other craft items on it. If it's a thematic journal jar you could put a design on the lid that matches the ones used on the papers inside. As for the outside of the jar, you can do whatever you wish, but it's a good idea to stay away from anything too complex, as it would obscure the contents of the jar too much. If you wanted you could do similar things to the side of the jar that you did with the lid - a little painting, perhaps something glued to the sides. One thing you might wish to do is affix a label to the side of the jar (or the lid, if you'd rather) that gives a title to the project. If it's a journal jar that's going to your friend Joe, you could decorate a sticky label and add the words "Joe's Journal Jar" to it.

The hardest part of the project is coming up with what to put on those bits of paper. As I mentioned above, it could be quotations (from books, poems, films, songs), a set of questions, or anything else you feel might help prompt the creative spark. If you're at a loss for what sorts of questions to use, I keep a collection of writing prompts that I've culled from various sources, or you can search out your own.

Journalling need not be the purpose of the jar, of course. You could do any of the following instead:

- Recipe jar: include the ingredients for the person's favourite dish, as well as the recipe for it - perhaps a version they've never tried before. This works well with cookies!
- Date jar: a nice idea for newlyweds, you could fill the jar with ideas of things for them to do together as a couple, or things they could do for each other.
- Craft jar: fill the jar with the necessary tools for a craft project, as well as the instructions to complete it.
- Project jar: fill the jar with all sorts of project ideas that could be used on their own or also with a journal, like collage ideas, ideas for day trips the person can take, ideas for paintings or other art projects, etc.
- Jar o' comfort: you could fill the jar with wise words and comforting quotations.
- Journal jar: you might want to include a matching notebook and pen with your gift.

As you can see, the possibilities are endless, both for content ideas and how you could decorate for them. They are fun and interesting projects to create, and in the end, you might be making someone else very happy. Gifts made by the giver have a treasured specialness to them, and are very memorable and unique.

Lonita has been an AU student since early 2002, and is studying towards a Bachelor of General Studies in Arts & Science. She enjoys writing, creating websites, drinks far too much tea, and lives in hopes of one day owning a plaid Cthulhu doll. The most exciting thing she's done so far in her lifetime is driven an F2000 racecar, and she's still trying to figure out how to top that experience. Her personal website can be found at <http://www.lonita.net> and what you can't find out about her through that, you can ask her via email: lonita_anne@yahoo.ca

CROSSING A BOOK

BY HEATHER WRIGLEY



Since the advent of radio, books have seemed in danger of obsolescence. First radio plays, then television, and finally the Internet, have all presented both fact and fiction in an engaging, lively manner with which some feared books could not compete. However, to those who love the printed page, these media are nothing more than pale imitators. While television may reproduce a story in glorious colour and sound, a keen imagination can turn a book into much more than that: smells, temperatures, textures, breezes and more are all part of the mental landscape of a well-written book.

Still, most book-lovers do not take a negative view of technology. In fact, there is one special group of readers who are using the Internet to turn their love of books into an exciting adventure in sharing and serendipity. The website www.bookcrossing.com has made it possible to keep track of books you've given away, so that you can find out where they go and what other readers think of them. It's called 'read and release', and it's an intriguing way to spread joy and books throughout the world.

Registering on, and using, the website is easy and doesn't cost anything. Once you've signed up and have printed a set of BookCrossing labels from the site, the fun begins. First, choose a book that you have finished reading and want to give away. From the BookCrossing website, click on 'register book'. Enter information about the book in the fields provided: its title, author, genre, and what you thought of it. (If you ever wanted to be a book critic, this is your chance!) When you've finished registering the book, the website will give you a BCID: a BookCrossing Identification Number. Stick a label inside the cover of book, write the BCID on it, and you're done.

So, you now have a book that's registered on the site and tagged with its own unique BCID. What's next? Why, you release the book, of course. Set it free! Give it to a friend, leave it behind on a park bench, or hand it to a stranger on the bus. Any way you can, get that book out into the world. This may be the most fun part of BookCrossing: deciding where to leave the book, and then quickly sneaking away before you're seen, like some kind of cloak-and-dagger philanthropist.

If you're lucky, the next person who receives the book will see the label and visit the website. There, they can enter the BCID and make a 'journal entry' about the book, explaining how it came into their hands and what they thought of it. When they're finished with the book, they can pass it on to someone else. The result is that as the book travels (sometimes literally around the world), an online log of its journey is created. Whenever someone new makes a journal entry for the book, each of its previous readers gets an e-mail notice from the site. Releasing a book is like sending a message to sea in a bottle: it is now at the mercy of currents and tides; all the releaser can do is trust that Fate will carry it where it needs to go.

It's exhilarating when a book gets journalled, and many of them do. I've released books around Calgary that have journeyed as far as Singapore, England, and Tokyo. A good example is a book called 'Words I Wish I Wrote', by Robert Fulghum. I bought and read this book years ago. It languished on my bookshelf until I

decided to release it last summer. I dropped it off on top of a bank machine on the University of Calgary campus, and crossed my fingers. Later that same day, I got an e-mail saying the book had been picked up and journalled by a student at the U of C. The journaller later passed the book on to someone in his carpool. She read it on her trip to London, where she gave it to someone else. That fellow took it with him on his vacation. He reported that the book accompanied him for several weeks, while he visited such places as Poland and Ukraine. He finally released it at Heathrow Airport on his way home. Everyone who was a part of this chain is now eagerly waiting to see where it travels next- and although I've never met any of these people, I somehow feel connected to them through the adventures of the book we share.

It's wonderful to get a message saying someone has stumbled upon your book and was delighted to receive this unexpected gift. Often, the books seem to 'find' specific people for a reason: sometimes the person has been wanting to try this author, or an inspirational book has reached them during a dark period of their life, or a travel guide to Belize turned up just when they were trying to decide on a vacation spot. Sometimes a bookcrosser will release a book they hated, and it will fall into the hands of someone who loves it.

Nearly all books seem to be found, in the sense that they disappear from their original location within an hour or two. The majority of finders never make a journal entry, but most bookcrossers agree that the act of giving is more important than whether they ever receive word of the book's whereabouts. There's just something magical about giving a gift to a random stranger, especially when that gift is something as precious as a book. Like sending a grown child off to see the world, once the book is out of your hands, all you can do is wish it well and hope that once in awhile, it will write home.



Dear Sandra is on hiatus this week while Sandra takes a much deserved vacation.

To keep the column relevant to you, Sandra needs more questions to answer!

If you have a question that you would like Sandra to answer, write her at smoore@ausu.org

The Voice does not collect information on people who send in questions, so your confidentiality is assured.

CANADIAN FED WATCH!

NEWS ACROSS THE NATION...

By Karl Low



GOVERNMENT DISCOVERS STUDENTS IN DEBT!

The Canada Millenium Scholarship Foundation has found that 70% of students undertake some type of debt in order to further their education. Hardly news, but it certainly seems to be to the Federal Government.

More interesting, however, is that the study goes much deeper into looking at what types of debt students are accumulating and how this breaks down over various groups of students. The finding of the study is that even with public loans, most students are still not getting enough to make ends meet on a month-to-month basis.

One conclusion the study comes to is that student finances do not affect academic performance, but students who are working more than ten hours per week take longer to complete their degree. Unfortunately, this conclusion is based on data provided by current students – in other words, those that were no longer in post-secondary education simply weren't included. This means that it could be students that had to work too much in order to continue their education ended up flunking out of their respective university or college.

It is interesting to realize that with 70% of students having to go into debt to finance their education, provincial governments across the country, and especially in Alberta, are still reluctant to raise the amount of funding they give to the universities, while at the same time all proclaiming how they are trying to get us prepared to live and work in a knowledge economy.

The worst part of this is that the government had to fund a study in order to determine that students are generally in over their heads financially, when various student union groups and individual students have been telling them this for years. I guess it goes to show exactly how much students are actually listened to by the government.

Unfortunately, we have only ourselves to blame for this. Most post-secondary students don't vote, often claiming they feel that they have no real choice anyway. If students could get together in how they voted, however, they would soon find that candidates that gave them a choice were lining up. After all, when we don't give our voices consequence, why should they listen?

NEW BRUNSWICK SCHOLARSHIP FOR FEMALE ENGINEERS

The Province of New Brunswick has announced a \$1,200 scholarship for all female engineering technology students that attend the New Brunswick Community College in Bathurst or Edmunston next fall. The only string attached is that the applicants must be going to one of those colleges, and must maintain an average of 70% or better in key courses.

One of those key courses, oddly to me, is French 10411. This suggests that the money for this new scholarship is not coming directly from the Province, but is rather part of the windfall funding that the federal government is putting in for a commitment to increased bilingualism across the country.

In any event, I am sure the scholarship is very much welcomed by women in New Brunswick, but it is a shame that the institutions are limited only to the Community Colleges. If you are an AU student in New Brunswick, particularly one going through the BSc programme, whether in Computing Sciences or health services, you should take this opportunity to let your government know about what you're doing, and that AU exists for people in your province as well.

A \$1,200 dollar scholarship for AU would entirely pay for two courses, after all. Wouldn't that be worth writing a letter?

GOVERNMENT VS. UNIVERSITY STAFF

The Provincial Government of British Columbia has passed legislation that forces angry university staff union members to stop picketing and for all members to return to the bargaining table.

This can be seen as simply another attack of British Columbia against its post-secondary education system. First they severely cut their funding for BC universities, then when staff become upset at having to be the ones who suffer for that, they pass laws restricting staff's right of assembly and protest.

A mediator has been assigned between the university and the staff for several months, apparently with little success. Despite this however, the government has legislated that both groups return to the table immediately, this time under the supervision of the assistant deputy minister for the Ministry of Skill Development and Labour. While it is hoped that some bargain can be reached, there now seems to be an implicit threat that if it is not reached, the government will certainly not shy away from legislation forcing these people back to work.

A native Calgarian, Karl is perpetually nearing the completion of his Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Information Studies. He also works for the Computer Sciences Virtual Helpdesk for Athabasca University and plans to eventually go on to tutor and obtain his Master's Degree.



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EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN

Part [1]

By Wayne E. Benedict



factories. Not surprisingly, the gender inequalities inherent to Canadian society generally were easily transposed to the new masses of wage-workers:

Women, who were subjugated generally in the paternalistic society of the period, were treated no better in the labour market. Their pay was markedly lower than males who performed the same tasks and they were relegated to the most menial, repetitive and mundane jobs with no chance of upward mobility. Industrial working conditions were unwholesome and hours of work were excessive. Workingwomen were expected to perform their proletarian tasks as well as the maintenance of their respective domiciles (the double day). Although John A. Macdonald's government was concerned enough about the antagonistic relationship between capital and labour to establish a Royal Commission to look into the situation, women's issues were little more than a side bar in its investigations. "The Royal Commission on Labour and Capital was not an enquiry into the nature of female labour in the 1880s...women were only a small part of such an inquiry" (Trofimenkoff, 1992). The male commissioners, like the women's male bosses on the factory floor, viewed the true female issues of poor wages, conditions and treatment as unimportant and the commissioners concentrated their inquiries on the nineteenth century moral implications of women working alongside men. Trofimenkoff (1992) believes that the 102 women who testified at the commission hearings were too intimidated to relate the true degradations of their situations (Benedict, 2001).

While contemporary workplace conditions for workers in general, and women in particular, are markedly improved over those of their nineteenth century predecessors, there remain numerous inequitable remnants of gender inequality in Canadian industrial relations. Gender inequality can, and does, take numerous forms which stubbornly continue despite various voluntary and/or government-imposed measures taken to reduce, if not eradicate, them. This essay will examine some of the issues surrounding problems that women workers, their employers, and policy-makers face in confronting and dealing with gender inequality in the workplace and Canadian industrial relations. Generally there are three main areas of concern which working women face disproportionate to their male counterparts: employment; compensation, and sexual harassment. The reader should note that the terminology used in discussing gender discrimination in the workplace is anything but clearly defined and even experts in the field disagree on *the* definition of any given term. On-topic phrases such as "equal pay for equal work", "equal pay for work of equal value" and "pay equity" seem closely related in their meanings but produce markedly different outcomes in their results. In fact, "Language can be used, intentionally or otherwise, to remove control of an issue from those most affected by it [women], simply by

using terms that most people don't understand" (Lewis, 1988, p. 11). The fact that pundits have not reached consensus on one official definition for any given phrase or concept merely adds to the confusion and frustration felt by those on the short end of the gender equality stick—working women and their advocates—and any other interested observers.

As briefly touched upon in the passage outlined *supra*, women, from their earliest incorporation into wage-work, had been “relegated to the most menial, repetitive and mundane jobs with no chance of upward mobility”. With the foundation of Canadian industrial relations laid thus, it has proven a monumental task to rectify gender inequality in employment and the struggle to do so is far from over. Women are still largely segregated to the secondary or tertiary labour markets in so-called female “job ghettos”; working under substandard conditions, for sub-male wages, and with little real chance of escape either through advancement into the management class or placement into a primary labour market position. Although there have been some definite improvements over the last century, occupational gender inequalities are still found across Canada and throughout industries. They are not the result of accumulative instances of individual direct discrimination against women, but rather a case of systematic gender discrimination built into the Canadian system of industrial relations. Discrimination can be defined as “subordination of groups or individuals resulting from a distinction, preference, restriction or exclusion based on improper grounds such as...sex...” (Sack & Poskanzer, 1984, p. 53). Systematic discrimination, in the context of the instant discussion, is indirect sexual discrimination which is the result of entrenched policies or practices built into the Canadian system of industrial relations resulting in women being relegated disproportionately to lower paying, menial jobs with little or no opportunity for advancement.

It is clear that women have historically borne the lion's share of domestic obligations and, in fact, that situation survives to the present day. Canadian women continue to be culturally and socially expected to maintain their homes and provide childcare to a degree far in excess of their male partners; that is, those that have male partners. An increasing number of contemporary women, by choice or otherwise, are finding themselves single, many of them raising children on their own. Combined with their domestic obligations, working women experience what is commonly referred to as the “double day”—putting in a full day of paid wage-work, only to return home to clean house, wash clothes, mind children, etc. (the second *unpaid* work-day). Men, who are generally unfettered by these significant extra-occupational obligations, find themselves advantaged in the job market. Even if female applicants are not directly discriminated against (in contravention of human rights and/or employment equity law) by potential employers who are concerned that familial obligations could detract from the female applicant's ability to perform optimally, the woman herself (particularly single mothers) will often find it unfeasible to “be everything to everyone” and must decline work opportunities that she otherwise would have accepted gladly. Socio-cultural attitudes and effects such as these are indicative of systematic gender discrimination.

In order to level the field, advocates of equality contend that universal daycare—government provided daycare—should be made available. This is an issue that could be the subject of a lengthy essay on its own and will not be probed too deeply here; however, there is much controversy surrounding the subject and it has yet to gain mainstream acceptance in any of its various forms by legislators across Canadian jurisdictions. “The B.C. NDP government promised universal daycare [in 2000], only to see it unpromised [sic] by the Liberals. And federal Liberals considered a national daycare program in 1999, but balked at the \$12-billion price tag” (Editorial, 2001). Meanwhile, as the debate over universal childcare continues to rage, working women are, on average, more occupationally disadvantaged compared to men due to their greater family responsibilities: “With no universal daycare, too many [working-class] women remain prisoners of their children” (Leclerc, 1994).

Balancing work and familial responsibilities is only one issue that disadvantages women workers. Another is an aspect of unionized work that is as old as the first industrial revolution and as dear to (mostly male) unionized workers as is collective action itself—seniority systems. Discrimination against women as a group can occur under various seniority systems in two ways: direct seniority discrimination & indirect seniority discrimination. The former type of seniority discrimination against women occurs less frequently than the latter in contemporary

society due to its obvious inequity, but it does continue to occur nonetheless. Direct seniority discrimination against women occurs where collective agreements provide for separate seniority lists for each sex. "...a Quebec Human Rights Commission Study...found that at least fifteen collective agreements entered into in that province in 1980 still provided for separate seniority units for male and female workers..." (Dulude, 1995, p. 27). Indirect seniority discrimination against women is much more difficult to perceive and, concomitantly, much more profuse than its direct form. Indirect discrimination "mainly results from two differences between men and women in the labour force: as a group, women accumulate substantially less seniority than men; and large proportions of female workers are segregated in the least desirable jobs"; over time, the seniority system ensures that overall, "...seniority rights increase the financial vulnerability of women, place them at a disadvantage relative to their male co-workers, and reinforce the inferior position of female workers in the labour force" (Dulude, 1995, pp. 27 & 48). The correlation between seniority rights and gender inequality is another issue which is far beyond the scope of this paper and is a subject upon which several books are based. It is enough for the purpose of this work that the reader recognize it as yet another insidious component of Canada's systematic discrimination against female workers.

Next Week: Discrimination in employment, and the effectiveness of the Human Rights Code...

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THE VOICE FICTION FEATURE



This week marks the conclusion of our original short novel, *Forgotten Promise*. Let us know what you thought, and if you would like to see this type of feature in the Voice again.

We are still seeking student fiction for our upcoming fiction column. Send your stories, poems, plays, or any other short fiction to voice@ausu.org

By Carla Johnson

Conclusion

Light was filtering through. "So what did you find out?" she asked.

"One of the nurses I worked with when I interned is a Public Health Nurse. I called her and asked if she could help me. I explained the circumstances surrounding your daughter's transfer here, and when it had happened. She wasn't Public Health Nurse then, but her supervisor was. Anyway, to make a long story shorter, she put me in contact with Mrs. Murray. When I asked her about the chances of her remembering a specific child, she said it wasn't likely. But when I mentioned the date, Vancouver, and adoption, it rang a few bells for her. She said she definitely remembered the occasion, but would have to think for a bit to remember details. When I suggested we meet later and treat her to dinner, she jumped at the chance. So what do you think?" he finally paused for breath.

"I think you are wonderful, Aaron. Maybe I shouldn't get my hopes up too high, but this seems so promising. If she actually remembers the home visit!" Her face shone with pleasure. "I just don't know how to thank you, Aaron."

"Don't thank me yet. It could be a false lead. But it does sound good. At the very least, I get to have dinner with you again!" he added, smiling boyishly.

Laura smiled back. His charm was infectious. Now all she had to do was get through the next few hours till supper.

As she returned to her ward, she thought, "Should I phone Adam?". The remembrance of last night overwhelmed her. Maybe it would be better to wait; he might think it was just an excuse to call. But then she paused and looked inside herself. So what if it was an excuse? She really wanted, needed to hear the reassuring warmth of his deep voice. Unhesitatingly, she stopped at the nearest pay phone and dialed his number.

"Hi, Adam, it's me", she stated breathlessly. There was a short pause. Maybe he didn't know her voice? Her heart plummeted. Then he spoke, "I was just thinking about you. How are you, Laura?"

"Great! I mean, good. I'm at work." She stopped, suddenly shy and fumbling for words.

"I know. I was waiting till you got home to call you. I'm hoping to see you tonight." The seductive tone in his voice made her knees weak.

"I . . . Uh, Adam. I mean, yes, I would like to see you too. But first I have to tell you my wonderful news." Quickly she explained what Aaron had found out, and that they were meeting Mrs. Murray for supper after work. Adam didn't seem to be paying attention to what she was saying. Then he interrupted, questioning, "Aaron? Who's Aaron?"

Adam, jealous? Choosing her words carefully, she explained who Aaron was, and how he had been helping her. The new, tenuous bond between them didn't need any further tests right now. Adam seemed mollified by her words. He hesitated, then asked, "Would you like me to join you at dinner?"

Laura was silent for a moment, turning over possibilities, then discarding them. "Much as I would love your company, I really think it would be best if I went alone, if you don't mind. I don't want to intimidate Mrs. Murray, it's too important that she remember what she can. But can we meet after, and I'll tell you all about it?" She felt weak in anticipation of being near him again.

"You're probably right, it's best to do it this way. And yes, of course we can meet. I'm having dinner with mother. Would you like to join us there after?"

Laura agreed and said a hurried goodbye, realizing that she was going to be late getting back.

All through that afternoon, in spite of her eager anticipation, she felt guilty pangs each time she crossed paths with Aaron. He kept giving her that conspiratorial look. It worried her that he knew nothing of Adam. While she didn't really think his intentions towards her were serious, he deserved to know that there was another man in her life. To allow him any misconceptions about where she stood emotionally would be unfair. Laura made up her mind to speak to him before they left for dinner.

He was waiting for her when she came to the front door, and gave her a brief hug. "Well, let's hope for the best!" he exclaimed, as he led her to his car. As soon as they were settled, she spoke. "Aaron, There's something I should have told you before. My

daughter ... well, she has a father", she finished quite lamely.

"Of course she does!" He responded jauntily, then noticing her discomfort, changed his tone. "Her father ... he's here in Edmonton?"

"Yes. I've been ... I mean, he's been helping me. We've been working together to try and find her. He didn't know anything about it until I came here", she offered, hoping to ease the explanation. "The thing is, he's married. I mean, he's getting a divorce, but it's nothing to do with me." She broke off. 'Ha! liar liar' her heart chanted. 'It's everything to do with you'. She continued, "I should have told you. I'm sorry, it didn't really seem to matter before."

They had pulled into the parking lot of the restaurant, but Aaron made no move to get out of the car. Then he turned and looked closely at her. "You still love him." he stated. All she could manage was a small nod. He didn't say anything for a moment, then reached over, placed his hand under her chin and gently turned her face towards him, smiling reassuringly.

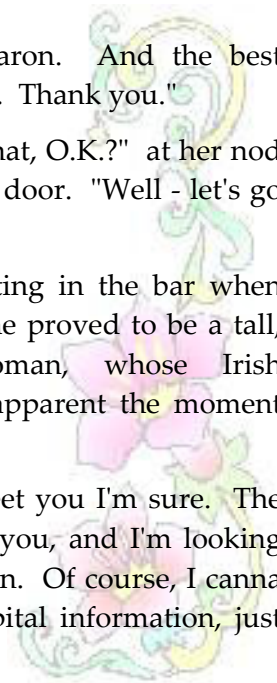
"I knew there was some reason that the famous 'Grant- charm-that-sends-maidens-swooning' seemed to have no affect on you! He must be really something for you to pass up a golden opportunity like me!" His mocking words effectively hid any other emotion he might be feeling and Laura was forced to smile back.

"You really are wonderful, Aaron. And the best friend I could ever hope to have. Thank you."

"I *am* your friend. Remember that, O.K.?" at her nod he released her and opened the door. "Well - let's go for it!"

Mrs. Murray was already waiting in the bar when they entered the restaurant. She proved to be a tall, well-endowed, motherly woman, whose Irish heritage became immediately apparent the moment she spoke,

"Well, and it's a pleasure to meet you I'm sure. The good doctor told me all about you, and I'm looking forward to helping anyway I can. Of course, I can't give you any confidential hospital information, just



what's in my memory." Her smile was warm and friendly, and Laura felt even more hopeful.

However, information was not that easily obtained. Mrs. Murray loved to talk. It seemed apparent that she was going to thoroughly enjoy dinner with them before she allowed any important tidbits to escape her memory. Laura was frustrated at first, but then resigned herself to the fact that it was a small price to pay for valuable information.

Mrs. Murray reminisced about many things, and the thousands of babies she had seen. She spoke of her four grown children and her two grandchildren, and all of their accomplishments. It didn't seem necessary for Laura or Aaron to speak - Mrs. Murray had the floor and was milking every minute. She was also enjoying the supper, attacking the food and wine with relish. Aaron caught Laura's eye and winked at one point. Patience!

Finally the waiter brought coffee, and Mrs. Murray stopped for breath. She smiled at their expectant faces. "Well now, children, I know you want to pick my brain." She turned to Laura. "If anyone ever tried to separate me from one of my children, to be sure I would kill. So ask me what you want to know."

Laura glanced at Aaron, and he plunged right in. "Mrs. Murray, on April 7, 1987 Laura had a daughter, born in Vancouver General Hospital. As near as we can determine, the baby was transferred here, possibly three or four weeks later, after having been adopted by a single woman who lived here in Edmonton. Do you remember ever visiting a baby that might fit that description?"

Mrs. Murray apparently was lost in thought for a moment. Then she began to speak. "I think the reason it stuck in my mind was, first of all, it was unusual for a single woman to adopt a baby. Most went to couples. Also, the baby coming from Vancouver was, not rare but uncommon. I remember it was around the May long weekend. I was thinking I had to get my garden planted that weekend; you know I always compare babies to planting a garden. The darlin's are like little plants that we have to nurture and guide so they grow straight and strong." She seemed to notice Laura's restlessness suddenly, and made an effort to get to the point. "Anyhow, I

went to visit on Friday afternoon. I canna remember the lady's name. I've tried, but it just doesn't come to me." She glanced apologetically at Laura.

"That's alright. Please tell us what you remember." Laura tried not to show her impatience.

"Well now, I remember thinking, as I drove up to the house, that this baby had the luck 'o the Irish! Her adoptive mother was obviously verry rich. A beautiful house, with a view of the river valley. And the inside! When I walked into the door it took my breath away." She seemed to realize she was becoming sidetracked again. "Well then, when I met the baby's mother, I was surprised. She wasn't young. I didna' think they allowed adoptions to older women. Well the baby was beautiful and healthy. Everything was as it should be. There was another woman there too, a younger one. She said verra little until I was ready to leave. Then she said something to the older lady that made me think that the younger lady was mistress of the house and the older lady just worked for her. I thought that was strange, too. But it looked like the baby would be well taken care of, she had a lovely room, and it looked like no expense would be spared, so I figured it would be O.K." Then she stopped.

Both Aaron and Laura looked at her expectantly, but she didn't speak again, just sat with a faraway look in her eyes, a half-smile on her lips.

Laura prompted her, "Is that all you remember?"

Mrs. Murray broke out of her reverie. "The only other thing I remember is the babe's name. It stuck in my mind because it was the name I gave my youngest daughter." Again she paused, irritatingly.

"What was the baby's name, Mrs. Murray?" Aaron prompted, trying to control his frustration.

"Melanie. Her name was Melanie."

A sudden buzzing filled Laura's head. Could it be possible? No. Adam wouldn't do something like that. But wait. It wasn't Adam. Vicki? Was she capable of such a thing? Laura knew the answer. The shattered pieces of her life began to fall into place. She jumped up from the table. "I must go. I have to .. I have to. I can't believe it!" was all she could say.

"Laura, wait!" exclaimed Aaron. Let me take you where you have to go!" He threw several bills on the table and quickly reassured Mrs. Murray, "It seems you've been a great help. Thank you. Please take care of the bill for me."

He then rushed off after Laura, leaving behind a curious, bemused Mrs. Murray.

He caught up with her outside the restaurant. She was standing there in dazed confusion when he grabbed her arm. "Laura, whatever it is, I'm here. I'm your friend, remember. Let me help you."

She turned to him blankly. Then her eyes cleared and she seemed to recognize him. "Please take me to Adam", was all she could whisper.

He managed to get an address out of her before she lapsed into dead silence. He drove as quickly as he dared, afraid of the way Laura was reacting. What could have put her into this state of shock?

Laura was, indeed in a state of shock, but not in a medical sense. It was the clear revelation of the truth that had left her stunned. In her mind she continued to piece evidence together. Her parent's sudden, easy departure from Edmonton. The money, the trust fund. Her father's last words. The house in the river valley. Vicki's threat to Adam. The easy way the adoption was handled. Money was involved of course. Money. It always came back to money. Adam had sold out to Vicki. Her parents had sold her baby. No, they did it out of love. Love. Then she thought of Melanie. Melanie - that beautiful little girl was hers. Hers and Adam's.

Melanie's grandmother suddenly intruded into her thoughts. No, Melanie's adoptive grandmother. No wonder she had seemed afraid of Laura. The picture. Who had sent the picture? How could Adam have not known anything? Was he in on this, with Vicki, using Laura? Immediately she was ashamed of her foolish suspicions. He was a victim, just as she was. Melanie was a victim. Laura hoped that her young life had been happy. Had her "grandmother" been good to her? She had seemed sharp and angry at Safeway. Why was Melanie so quiet and withdrawn? Laura's heart contracted painfully. "Oh, baby", she promised, "I'll do everything in my power to make up to you what you've missed." Adam. Adam had been

good to Melanie. Had it been some primeval instinct, telling his subconscious the truth? Perhaps. But whatever reason, Laura gave a prayer of thanks. Adam had been good to Melanie. Adam and his mother. And now, she and Adam would make things right.

Aaron squealed up in front of Mrs. Jacob's house, prompting someone to look out the window. Laura opened the door, then turned back to Aaron. He really was her friend. "Thank you Aaron. I can't begin to tell you what you've done. Thank you."

With that she ran towards the house, where the door was already open, Adam waiting for her, framed by the light. She ran into the strong circle of his arms and as he drew her inside, started to incoherently stammer the story. Somehow, as her words tumbled over each other frantically, he understood. She felt his embrace stiffen in tightly controlled rage as comprehension dawned. "The bitch." Was all he said. "The evil, wicked, bitch."

He released Laura gently and headed for the front door. Fortunately his mother had retained her senses. "Stop, Adam!", she ordered. "You can't just storm in there and grab Melanie. You have to do things the right way. Legally she has been adopted. God knows, she may have affection for the woman who pretended to be her grandmother. You can't traumatize her in your anger. And you must deal with Vicki; successfully break any hold she might have over you. You've waited this long, a few more hours won't make a difference. Let's plan this properly."

The flame in Adam's eyes calmed at his mother's words. She was right, of course. So they sat down and in mutual shock and disbelief, planned the best course of action. None of them wanted to put into words what they felt inside. It was too incredibly unbelievable. That Vicki could have done this, right under their noses, so to speak! But their shock was tempered by another emotion. The search was over. Melanie had been found. Now they had to make sure they never lost her again.

Finally it was decided that Adam would call his partner, Jerry, and take him along as an impartial witness, unknown to Vicki if possible. His

confirmation of the confession they hoped Vicki would make would go a long way in any conceivable court action. Much as Laura wanted to go along, she realized the wisdom of her staying put.

Adam's main concern was how to get Vicki to admit what she had done. "If I confront her, she'll just deny it, and we have no proof." He rubbed his forehead with his hand in frustration. "There has to be a way!"

"Why don't you appeal to her ego?" Mrs. Jacob's suggested gently. "Compliment her on her cleverness. Act like you know all the details. Bluff her."

Adam's eyes lit up. "You're right, mother. I think that will work! But I'll make sure Agnes is there as well. Then I can watch her reaction too."

"Agnes?" Laura looked questioningly at him.

"Melanie's grand ... I mean, adoptive grandmother. We still don't know how she fits in. But she has been working for Vicki since Vicki was a baby, and I don't doubt that her loyalty would lead her to any extreme for Vicki's sake."

By now it was past nine, and time suddenly became of the essence. Adam called Jerry, and in hushed tones briefly explained the situation and what he needed from him. It was arranged to meet in front of the house in 15 minutes.

Adam embraced Laura once, tightly, confidently. Then he kissed her hard. "We'll win this together, love. I promise." Then he was gone, leaving her watching helplessly at the front door as he roared away. There was nothing left to do but wait.

Mrs. Jacobs was a silent support in the hour that followed. Nothing needed to be said, for it was plainly written in their hearts. They drank cup after cup of tea, and minutes began to seem endless. Laura took to pacing, running to the window at the sound of any passing car. "What could be happening?" She wondered. But her confidence and trust in Adam kept her sane. He would handle it. He would be successful.

When the telephone shrilled shortly after eleven, both Laura and Mrs. Jacobs nearly jumped out of their

skins. Laura ran for the phone, Mrs. Jacobs beside her. "Yes? Adam?"

His voice sounded strange, strangled. "Laura. They're all gone."

"What do you mean, they're all gone?" she demanded. She looked up at Mrs. Jacobs, fear in her eyes.

Then he explained as quickly as possible what had happened. "Everything went as planned. Vicki's ego got the better of her, and she taunted me, laughed at me for what she had done. She admitted that her father had paid your father to leave. She admitted that together they had set up the trust fund. She wasn't going to accept responsibility for Melanie, though, until I dragged Agnes in. When she tried to put everything on Agnes, the woman got angry. Agnes told the rest of the story and confirmed what we believed. Then I called Jerry in, and Vicki realized he had heard everything. She just went crazy, screaming at us. In the middle of this Agnes got up and stormed out, yelling that she was leaving permanently. I ran after her and asked, 'what about Melanie?' She yelled, 'What about her? The kid's been a bloody nuisance. Keep her!' And then she was gone."

His voice broke a little, but he continued, "When I came back to the front room, Vicki was gone too. But worst of all, when I went to look for Melanie, she was gone. It looks like all the screaming woke her up. None of us noticed, but she must have been in the next room listening. I don't know how much she heard, but her coat and shoes are gone. She's run away." The last words were spoken in a choked voice, as if he was crying. By this time Laura was close to tears as well.

"We'll be right there", she assured him, glancing at Mrs. Jacobs' nod of agreement.

"Jerry and I are going to search the grounds first. Hurry." The connection was broken, and Laura and Mrs. Jacobs lost no time in getting on their way.

As they drove, Laura explained what had happened. Mrs. Jacobs gasped audibly when Laura relayed Agnes's cruel words about Melanie, and her lips tightened in anger. A few minutes later they were in

Adam's driveway. He came around from behind the house and enveloped both of them in a hug.

Laura pulled away. "I've thought of somewhere I believe Melanie might be, Adam. The park where I first met her. She said she liked to go there. It's not far - I think we should try there first." Laura didn't want to voice the terror she felt in her heart at the thought of her little girl lost somewhere in the dark, at the mercy of whoever might come along. It was late, and the river valley was a dark haven for anyone lurking with evil intent.

"Let's go then". They wasted no time, the car in gear and moving as they jumped inside.

Minutes later, they were at the edge of the park. The three of them ran past the rim of trees to the open area where the playground was. Laura almost cried out in relief when she saw the small, forlorn figure sitting on the swings. She was going to run on, but thought better of it. "Oh, Adam. She must be so confused and frightened. We have to be careful."

Mrs. Jacobs nodded. "I'll wait here. Adam you go along first. She is comfortable with you. And Laura you go too. She's your daughter."

So Adam slowly approached Melanie, making lots of noise so as not to startle her. Laura lagged several feet behind. When he was almost in front of the little girl, he crouched down to his knees. Melanie refused to look up.

"Melanie", he spoke softly, "I've come to take you home."

After what seemed an eternity, Melanie slowly looked up into his face. Laura still hung back, afraid of saying or doing something that might alienate her child.

"Adam?" Melanie's voice was very small. "Was it true what she said?" There was a small, angry emphasis on the word "she".

Adam kept his gaze steadily locked with Melanie's. "Yes, Melanie. Everything "she" said was true. But what your ...," his voice choked at the word, "grandmother ... said. It wasn't true. She loves you very much."

Melanie looked down again, then shook her head slowly. "No, I don't think she does. But ... I don't care." Her small chin quivered, then she shyly peeked up at Adam again. "I ... I always used to pretend you were my real father." A stray tear rolled down her cheek as she tried to smile a little.

Adam could stand it no longer. He leaned forward and pulled the small form into his arms. She hesitated a moment, then her tiny arms reached around his neck, her cheek pressed tightly against his, his back heaving in silent sobs. Tears flowed freely down Laura's face as she stood apart, unwilling to intrude.

Finally Adam released Melanie and stood up. He took her small hand in his and said, "Come, Melanie." Then he turned towards Laura.

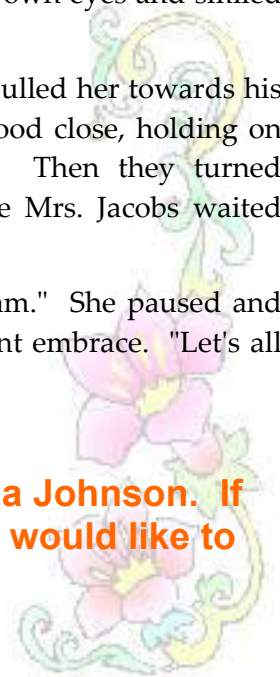
Melanie was leaning close, trustingly to Adam, her hand tight in his. Then she turned to face Laura as well. Slowly, tentatively, she reached out her other hand towards Laura. Laura took hesitant, stumbling steps towards her daughter, then clasped the small, cold hand into her own. She looked up through her tears to meet the eyes of her beloved Adam. He blinked back the wetness in his own eyes and smiled lovingly at her.

"Let's all go home." His voice pulled her towards his embrace. The three of them stood close, holding on to each other for a moment. Then they turned towards the rim of trees where Mrs. Jacobs waited patiently.

At last Laura spoke. "Yes, Adam." She paused and again they locked eyes in a silent embrace. "Let's all go home."

The End

We hope you have enjoyed this Voice original short novel by Carla Johnson. If you have any poems, short stories, or other short fiction that you would like to submit, contact the editor at voice@ausu.org.





CONAN THE BARBARIAN MOVIE REVIEW

BY LAURA SEYMOUR



Flipping channels one afternoon I bumped into Arnold Schwarzenegger in a fur outfit. Since much of Alberta was locked in sub zero temperatures and there were fires in the scenes I felt a bit warmer watching. I wondered if I'd previously missed Arnold in *One Million Years B.C.* but then I remembered he wasn't in Hollywood when Raquel Welch floored the world in her fur bikini – but that's another review! No, this was *Conan The Barbarian*, and I'd never seen it. Here's my general sum up ...unless I'm deathly tired and can't reach the remote control I'm not planning to watch it again either.

The Movie Central write up describes this film as, "The epic tale of [a] child sold into slavery who grows into a man who seeks revenge against the warlord who massacred his tribe." Well, fair enough but there's a lot of nonsense plot missing from that description.

The stars of this, mostly silly, film include Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Earl Jones, Max Von Sydow, and Sandahl Bergman.

Frankly, I was shocked at what I saw. Not because of the nudity and violence but because goody two-shoes Arnold was in it! I watched as his naked self hopped into two hot love scenes, with two separate naked actresses. The scenes were pretty good, but the rest of the film is a hodgepodge of action, nonsense and muscle. I would consider this a good, "when I'm not busy" film. What that translates to is, "Honey, I'm going to wash my hair.... tell me when the hot stuff comes up...if I'm not dripping...!" The rest is shampoo and condition time.

The beginning of the film is loaded with action - or maybe I should say movement - but is generally without any dialogue. I started to wonder if I was looking at a carefully planned, "look he's got a thick accent we can't get rid of so..." cover job but speaking eventually gets going...including from Austrian-accented Arnold.

James Earl Jones portrays the warlord. Eventually he grows up – errr ... sort of ...and decides to change his early ways of violence to only sporadic "when it suits me" violence and being the high priest of a peculiar temple that worships a two-headed snake the size of a house.

Max Von Sydow is brought into this to throw in some plot for Arnold. He is the incredibly wealthy father of a girl taken away by the mean ol' James Earl Jones and his temple of snake worshippers. After heaping pretty red plastic (all exactly the same size and shape!) on him...he tells him there is more where it came from if he can bring home his daughter.

Sandahl Bergman plays a petty thief who wins Arnold's bed --err --heart and then gets temporarily left behind as he goes off to find the missing daughter. She later pulls some much-needed estrogen back into the film.

Philosophy is mixed up in this old 1980s film. James is supposed to believe in his ability more than the sword, but when it suits his character he's back to violence. Oooops...loophole.

The score is an orchestration of "larger than life" kind of music. The big draw for me was that I didn't have to listen to the one pop hit that the studio could afford to buy being recycled throughout the film over and over. But then again I'll ask you "name one song from Conan the Barbarian?" Uh huh ... me too.

But let's face it the point to this film is ...well...muscle. Look at Arnold's arm muscles, his tight backside, his enormous chest size. Sigh... I'd rather look at Jean Claude Van Damme. Sorry. It's a fun..."I really don't want to study but I need a break" film. Skip the popcorn...it will only get stuck in your throat when you start laughing - or is that snoring?

Expect to spend two hours and thirty minutes to watch this 1982 nonsense. It's rated R and will next show March 12.

Laura Seymour first published herself, at age 8. She has since gone on to publish a cookbook for the medical condition Candida. She is working toward her B.A. (Psyc).



Notice to AU Graduate Students and Those Considering Grad Studies at AU

Athabasca University Students' Union is in the process of establishing an AU Graduate Students' Association.

Here's a sampling of benefits of belonging to a grad students' association:

- Grad student representation on University Committees
- University and government advocacy and lobbying
- Affiliation with provincial and national graduate students' organizations.
- Assistance with university / student dispute resolution
- Information source
- Networking

For more information contact:

Shirley Barg [sbarg@ausu.org], Vice-President
Athabasca University Students' Union
Call: 1-800-788-9041 ext 3413

NEWS FROM AU - CONTRIBUTED BY THE INSIDER

AU WELCOMES NEW GOVERNING COUNCIL MEMBER AND VPFA

New Governing Council Member



Athabasca University is pleased to announce that the Lieutenant Governor in Council has appointed Joy Romero as a member of the Athabasca University Governing Council.

Ms. Romero is presently the Director, Bitumen Production at Canadian Natural Resources Ltd. in Calgary, where she resides. She has served in various leadership roles in the engineering and technology field, including project

manager, project leader, and process manager.

She has a wealth of volunteer experience in the community, including a firm commitment to education as demonstrated through substitute teaching, parent advisory, serving as a school trustee, module advising, and facilitating the acquisition of LAN and Internet services.

Ms. Romero currently advises NSERC (National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada) post-graduate research programs on oil sands applicable research at the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and Dalhousie University. In a related matter, Dietmar Kennepohl and Bruce Spencer are the new academic staff member appointments to Governing Council. They will begin serving three-year terms effective March 22.

AUGC thanks outgoing members Jay Smith and Don Kvill for their contribution and service to Governing Council. "The time, effort, and expertise that you shared with us have been very much appreciated." Their terms expire March 21.

Welcome New VPFA

Pat Eagar joined AU on Feb. 24 as our new Vice-President, Finance and Administration. Most recently she was director, Corporate Services, and chief financial officer for the Westview Regional Health Authority (WRHA) in Spruce Grove, AB. Prior to the WRHA, Pat spent 10 years with the Central Vancouver Island Health Region and Nanaimo Regional General Hospital and the Alberta native became more used to rain clouds and flowers in February than blizzards and snow drifts.

Looking out her window at AU Central is a reminder that she has left balmy weather behind, but she doesn't seem to mind, and is looking forward to the challenge. She says one of the appealing aspects of joining the AU team is that "it is exciting to belong to an organization that wants to lead in its field," and cites the growth in the marketplace, both in Canada and internationally, and the opportunity for continued expansion as key reasons for accepting the position.



New VPFA Pat Eagar settles into her surroundings.

While her experience for the last decade has been in the health care field, she sees similarities in moving to education: both require dealings with governments and restrictive funding. As well, there are many similarities in working closely with professionals, whether they be doctors or academics. She notes that the Alberta Ministry of Learning has a more open, collegial environment than their colleagues in health, and sees this as a positive sign.

She expects her time will be divided between Athabasca and Edmonton since her new position allows for a increased focus at the strategic level, which will include meetings with key stakeholders, such as government, on a regular basis. As well, she sits on the Edmonton chapter of the CMA board, and next year will serve as vice-chair.

Although she will be spending a lot of time in the city, she still looks forward to availing herself of the advantages of small-town life, including golf and swimming. However, her first task is finding somewhere to live that will accommodate visits from her husband, their two sons and a daughter-in-law, and their two Jack Russell terriers. Until then, she will be calling AU home.

EDMONTON PLAYRIGHT TO AUTHOR AU COURSE

SME Playwright



Centre for Language and Literature professor Dave Brundage reports that Vern Thiessen has been hired on an SME (subject matter expert) contract, to help Dave develop English 402: Writing for Performance.

Dave says that Vern has already found some promising sites; and they will be amalgamating these into a senior level course in script writing and critical thinking.

Although this course is to be entirely online, it appears likely that a seminar version of it will also be offered at Grant MacEwan Community College, for students in the Bachelor of Applied Communications in Professional Writing.

Vern is slated to teach the first offering at GMC, and Dave expects considerable excitement to gather when this teaching appointment becomes better known.

And speaking of better known, Vern is becoming familiar to Edmonton theatre goers for his new play, *Einstein's Gift*, which is receiving positive reviews ("Grandly ironic, eloquent," says the *Edmonton Journal*. "Thiessen's writing has a lyrical bent ..." says the *Globe and Mail*). It plays at The Citadel until March 16.

A further plug: Dave says that English 402 is a new addition to AU's steadily evolving staple of creative writing offerings and "we expect it to be practical, fun, and challenging."

Academic Council

At its March 5th meeting, Academic Council recommended support in principal of the 2003-04 Budget Advisory Committee report. In the report, the committee recommends an operating budget of \$62 million. The following are some of the highlights:

Budget Assumptions

- 10 per cent registration growth
- 2 per cent government grant increase
- Tuition fee increases to balance the budget (see more below)

- 5 per cent overhead from CIM, MHS, and MDE
- Reinvest in frozen/reconfigured positions
- To meet a shortfall in the base budget, the following fee increases are being proposed:
 - Base tuition will increase 7.32 per cent to **\$381** from \$355 (even with the increase, AU's tuition will still be the lowest in Alberta)
 - Learning Resources fee will increase to **\$150** from \$131 (bringing it to a cost-recovery basis)
 - Application fee will increase to **\$60** from \$50
 - Transcript fee will increase to **\$20** from \$10
 - Withdrawal fee will increase to **\$100** from \$75

Challenges to be faced on the revenue side include modest government grant increases, tuition fee pressure, and the need to generate reserves. On the expenditure side, challenges include significant salary increases, pension underfunding, the ongoing need for technology, managing growth, and program expansion.

The budget will be presented to the Finance Committee today (March 7) and then to Governing Council at its meeting on March 21.

Clarke on Crime

Professor Curtis Clarke isn't just head of the Criminal Justice program at AU: he also has a daily presence on Court TV Canada. He hosts 'flow items' known as *Duty Calls* that air two to three times each day between regular programming. To create these lead-in segments, Curtis suggests story ideas to producers who make the arrangements, and then he interviews law enforcement officials in the Edmonton area.



Curtis Clarke interviewing for Duty Calls.

He also writes editorials (also known as *Duty Calls*) that reach a national audience on the Court TV [web site](#). In them, he offers commentaries on issues governing public and private policing that Canadians encounter.

Check your local listings to find Court TV Canada. Autographs, anyone?

Provided by The Insider

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

OLIVE W. GARVEY FELLOWSHIPS

Value: Students up to the age of 35: First Prize: **\$2,500**; Second Prize: **\$1,500**; Third prize: **\$1,000**
Junior faculty members not yet tenured: First Prize: **\$10,000**; Second Prize: **\$5,000**; Third Prize: **\$1,500**



APPLICATION DEADLINE: MAY 1, 2003

Administrator: the Independent Institute

Notes: Beginning with the 2002-2003 Contest, essay submissions may be made by both students *and* junior faculty members. For the 2003 essay topic and more information, see the Garvey Fellowship website.

Contact Information:

Mr. Carl P. Close
Academic Affairs Director
The Independent Institute
100 Swan Way, Oakland, CA 94621-1428
Phone: 510-632-1366
Fax: 510-568-6040
Email: CClose@independent.org
Website: <http://www.independent.org/garvey.html>

L. RON HUBBARD WRITERS OF THE FUTURE

Value: PRIZES EVERY THREE MONTHS: **\$1,000, \$750, \$500**
ANNUAL GRAND PRIZE: **\$4,000** ADDITIONAL!

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 4 QUARTERS: OCTOBER 1, JANUARY 1, APRIL 1 AND JULY 1

Notes: Contest is open to writers who have not been professionally published. Stories of all types of science fiction, fantasy and horror with fantastic elements, are welcome. To be eligible, entries must be works of prose, up to 17,000 words in length. We regret we cannot consider poetry, or works intended for children.

Contact Information:

L. Ron Hubbard's
Writers Of The Future Contest
P.O. BOX 1630
Los Angeles, CA 90078
Website: <http://www.writersofthefuture.com/17/RULES/WOTFRules.html>

T-Shirts all in the wash?

Buy a new one, from AUSU





CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

Contributed By AU's *The Insider*

- **CU Expo** - Community-University Institute for Social Research - "Partnerships, Policy & Progress" - May 8-10, 2003, Saskatoon, SK. Details: <http://www.usask.ca/cuisr/cuexpo>
- **Distance Education Technology Symposium** (DETS-03) - sponsored by the Centre for Distance Education - May 15 - 17, 2003 - Edmonton, Crowne Plaza Hotel. Details: <http://cde.athabascau.ca/DET/2003/> or contact [Pat Fahy](#).
- **AMTEC (Association of Media & Technology in Education in Canada)** - "E-convergence: Education, Media & Technology" - May 25-28, 2003, Montreal, PQ. Details: <http://www.amtec.ca>
- **ICDE World Conference** - 21st annual - June 1-5, 2003 - Hong Kong. Details: <http://www.ouhk.edu.hk/HK2003>
- **CADE** - June 7-11, 2003 - St. John's, NF. Details: <http://www.cade-aced2003.ca/>
- **"Women and Leadership in Higher Education: How Thick is the Glass Ceiling?"** - International Conference - June 12 - 14, 2003 - Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. Details: http://www.swaac.ca/Prof_Dev.htm or <http://www.swaac.ca/Regional.htm>

GREAT CANADIAN LITERARY HUNT Call For Submissions

"THIS Magazine is now accepting poetry and short fiction entries for its 7th annual Great Canadian Literary Hunt. First prize in poetry is \$1000 and national publication, first prize in fiction is \$1000 and national publication. For entry guidelines and details visit www.thismagazine.ca"



FREE MICROSOFT .NET STUDENT EVENT

Join us in a city near you to hear the latest information on creating next-generation applications. Learn all about developing and accessing XML Web Services on the Windows .NET Framework and Shared Source CLI (Rotor). Be one of the first to check out new mobile device programming techniques and preview the upcoming Visual Studio .NET 2003.

Dinner will be provided. All attendees will receive a free copy of Visual Studio .NET Academic (\$109 value), and variety of academic resources including tutorials, and code samples. Please be aware that you must be a student with a valid student ID to attend these events.

FREE SOFTWARE FOR STUDENTS WHO ATTEND!

EVENT AGENDA

4:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Registration
4:30 pm – 5:15 pm	.NET Overview
5:15 pm – 6:00 pm	.NET Languages
6:00 pm – 6:45 pm	Dinner
6:45 pm – 7:45 pm	Shared Source CLI (Rotor)
7:45 pm – 8:30 pm	XML Web Services demo
8:30 pm – 8:45 pm	Tablet PC Demo and Academic Programs

REGISTRATION

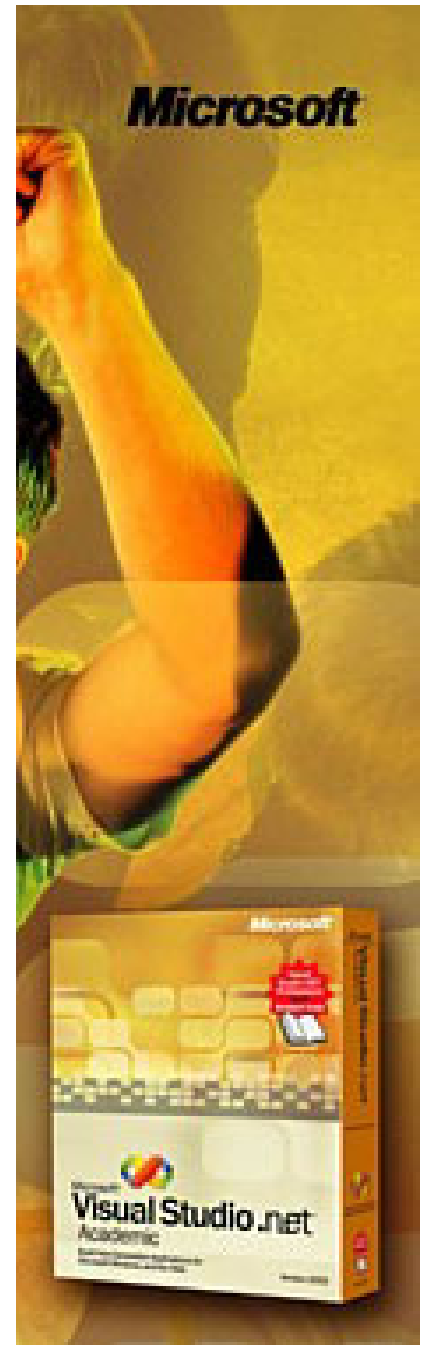
For more information and to register for an event in a city near you, please visit: <http://www.msdnua.net/canada/studenttour>. Below is the tour itinerary:

Calgary Wednesday, March 19th, 2003
Vancouver Thursday, March 20th, 2003

Just added:

Edmonton Wednesday, April 2, 2003

We look forward to seeing you at this exciting event!





Community Networks Group

EDMONTON EVENTS

To list seminars, concerts, and other events of interest to students across Canada, contact voice@ausu.org

Edmonton Dialogues on Foreign Policy

Join us & share your views on Canada's foreign policy...

Saturday March 22, 2003

Theme: **Responses to Unrest**

New Time: 9:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Continental breakfast begins at 8:30 a.m. @ the Central Academic Building 265

University of Alberta Campus / Admission is free
Infoline: **492-5962** / www.international.ualberta.ca

Responses to Unrest: Today there are about 37 conflicts in 30 countries around the world -- all of them civil wars. Most of them began more than a decade ago, meaning entire generations of children are being denied access to meaningful education, health care is minimal, economic development remains on hold and large numbers of displaced people require humanitarian assistance and resettlement. Add to this much more attention and anxiety about the issue of international terrorism.

One of the presenters for this theme is Prof. David Dewitt, Director of the Centre for International and Security Studies at York University. He is the author or contributing editor of eleven books as well as other publications on Canadian foreign, security, and defence policy, international and regional security and conflict management in Asia Pacific and the Middle East, and linkages between security and development. He served as national chair of Canadian Professors for Peace in the Middle East and is currently co-director of the Canadian Consortium on Human Security.

For further information, please contact:

Nancy.Hannemann@ualberta.ca

Tel: 492-5962 / Fax: 492-1134

www.international.ualberta.ca

Festival Place & For The Love of Latin Music Society presents:

A very special concert, **José Seves** and **Elizabeth Morris** with *The Bomba Trio*.

Sunday, March 30, doors 7:00; showtime 7:30 at Festival Place, 100 Festival Way Sherwood Park. Tickets \$22.00 for cabaret seating, \$19 for theatre, call the Festival Place

box office at **449-3378** or TicketMaster at **451-8000**.

Festival Place and For The Love of Latin Music Society are proud to present an evening with **José Seves** and **Elizabeth Morris**, on their first North American tour. Former singer and songwriter from the legendary Chilean ensemble Inti-Illimani, José Seves' voice & songs are widely known & admired around the world.

Multi-instrumentalist **Elizabeth Morris** is also a composer whose songs have been recorded by the new generation of female singers from Chile. **José Seves** is a folklorist from the Nueva Canción (New Song), a movement from the late 60s that sparked social and political change in Latin America. Chile produced many outstanding roots musicians like José Seves, who dedicated an important part of their creative work to songs inspired by the political action of workers, peasants and the poor. These people demanded respect for their rights and openly confronted the power of the wealthy; the musicians' inspiration was transformed in song and the songs were given back to its source: the people who saw themselves mirrored in the music.

We can now experience the sheer beauty of this music, steeped in tradition and presented exquisitely by **José Seves** and **Elizabeth Morris**, accompanied by *The Bomba Trio*. The Bomba Trio are three artists from the heart of local Latin super group Bomba who have deep roots in Latin America - Chileans Mario Allende on percussion and Marco Claveria on tres and guitar, with Brazilian Rubim de Toledo on bass, joined this night by Cuban percussionist Israel "Toto" Berriel and renowned keyboardist Chris Andrew. The music they will play for us will be emotional, rich and lilting.

José Seves and **Elizabeth Morris** with *The Bomba Trio*. Sunday, March 30, doors 7:00; showtime 7:30 at Festival Place, 100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park. Tickets are \$22.00 for cabaret seating, \$19 for theatre, call the Festival Place box office at 449-3378 or TicketMaster at 451-8000.

For photos, info, interviews, etc. contact:

Marlene D'Aoust / Tel: **464-2852** –

email: marlened@festivalplace.ab.ca

Mario Allende / Tel: **463-4915** –

email: mallende@interbaun.com

Hala and the King...

A powerful Lebanese Folk Operetta by the Rahbani Brothers Performed by the Al-Arz Lebanese Art Group.

March 23, 2003 - 8:00 p.m. @ The Horowitz Theatre
University of Alberta Students' Union Building
Info., tickets & reservations: **457-2007 / 699-2668**

Under the patronage of H.E. **Raymond Baaklini**, Ambassador of Lebanon and with the collaboration of the Canadian Lebanese Community of Edmonton we proudly present The Lebanese Folk Operetta by the Rahbani Brothers **Hala and the King** ... Featuring over 30 actors, singers and dancers. Starring: Dunia El-Dick, Nader Hajjar, Majid Ibrahim...

About the Al-Arz Lebanese Art Group ...

Founded in 1976 by Mr Tony Yazbek, the Al-Arz Lebanese Art Group emerges as North America's leading Lebanese performing arts organization. The group is committed to the creation, development and promotion of Canadian stage work, shining the light on rising and established artists of Lebanese background. It brings together approximately 70 artists together in a myriad of programs and events that celebrate the wealth and quality of Lebanese performing artists in Canada. Members of the group also include technicians, administrators, and valuable volunteers.

Visit www.wlcu.ab.ca for links and pictures.
Info., tickets & reservations: **457-2007 / 699-2668**

PEACE MARCH March 22, 2003

1:00 p.m. at CHURCHILL SQUARE
Infoline: **988-6634**

The international anti-war community is calling for escalating protest as war danger grows. The Edmonton Coalition Against War and Racism is organizing another local demonstration in opposition to the potential war on Iraq. An Edmonton PEACE MARCH has been planned for MARCH 22, starting at 1:00 p.m. at CHURCHILL SQUARE. We will march through the downtown to the Legislature for speakers. Edmonton will once again send the message:

- . NO WAR - WAGE PEACE
- . stop the so-called war on terror
- . no Canadian participation in ANY war on Iraq (U.S. or U.N. led)
- . stop the non-military sanctions against Iraq
- . stop the racist backlash
- . stop the erosion of civil liberties

Despite our fears about which way the international crisis will be resolved, one thing IS certain - February 15 made a huge impact. Bush, Blair & company can no longer ignore the growing opposition to this war. Around the planet, people who participated in February 15 are prepared to continue the protests against war on Iraq. We ARE making a difference - and we must continue to do so! See

you out on Saturday, March 22nd and please, spread the word far and wide...

For more information about how you can assist the Edmonton Coalition Against War and Racism, telephone **988.2713** or contact any of the following spokespeople:

Glen McLean **426-6682**
e-mail: tibet@ecn.ab.ca

Patti Hartnagel **435-7051**
e-mail: phartnag@compusmart.ab.ca

Lisa / Paul Jensen-Hengstler **988-6634**
e-mail: lisaandpaul@compusmart.ab.ca

The Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership presents...

'Escape From Politics' (a community forum).
Tuesday 25 March 2003 / 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. (**Free Admission**) - Tory Lecture Building Theatre 12 / Saskatchewan Drive (at 93rd Avenue)
For further info: www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca / **(403) 244-6666**

- Is the quality of democratic politics declining?
- Do citizens have a democratic responsibility that they are not meeting?
- Have the Left and the Right failed to sufficiently engage the public in debate about the implications of their visions?

Clearly, withdrawal from politics, a sense of futility of participation, and concerns about greed and unethical behaviour are not healthy for building strong communities. Yet many people are deeply engaged in communal activity at the local level, where they can make a difference.

What lessons can we learn from all this? What steps can be taken to strengthen democracy at local national and international levels?

Speaker:

Dr. Reg Whitaker Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus, York University and Adjunct Professor of Political Science, University of Victoria

Commentators:

Dr. Lois Harder Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Alberta
Dr. David Kahane Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Alberta
Ms. Elizabeth Panasiuk Ph.D. Student, Department of Philosophy, University of Alberta
Chair: Dr. Gordon Laxer, Professor of Sociology, University of Alberta

Co-sponsored by the University of Alberta Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy, Social and Political Thought Network (SPT@UA), and the Parkland Institute.



CLASSIFIEDS:

CLASSIFIED SPACE:

Students of AU may print classifieds in *The Voice* free of charge (maximum three per issue) as long as they are not representing a company or product.

Classified ads should be submitted to the editor at voice@ausu.org with 'CLASSIFIED AD' listed in the subject title.

The Editor reserves the right to refuse any classified advertisement at her discretion. Thank-you.

THE VOICE

c/o Athabasca University Students' Union
#306, 10030-107th Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4
800.788.9041 ext. 3413

Editor In Chief Tamra Ross Low

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