

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 11 Issue 36  
September 3, 2003

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Visiting ground zero

### **\$3.50 Pencil Challenge**

Weight loss subscriptions for the student budget

### **The Day The City Lived**

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### ***The first ever Voice writing contest!***

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# THE VOICE

Sep 03, 2003

Volume 11, Issue 36

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**We love to hear from you! Send your letters to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter in the Voice.**

Bravo to the Voice Editor for speaking out on the sensitive issue of the relationship between a university and its students' union (Editorial Page - v11 i35 2003-08-27). It's important to forge and maintain good working relationships between the two whenever possible. Those relationships, however, should not be what drives the actions of a students' union. Building the relationship between a students' union and its members must always be the ultimate goal.

I have to admit that during my term on Council, I've been guilty of sometimes putting the interests of AU ahead of the interests of the members, rationalizing it to myself by saying that if its good for the university it will then be of benefit to our members. This was the result of my initial contact with AUSU Council coming at a time when there had been some erosion of the working relationship between past Councillors and a handful of AU admin staff. But, as I grew more confident in my role as a Councillor, an AUSU Executive member, and a representative of AU students at provincial level, I came to fully recognize that I am a voice of students and that I must never compromise that trust they have placed in me--even if it meant setting the AU/AUSU relationship aside to deal with crucial issues for students.

Shirley Barg

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## THE VOICE

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c/o Athabasca University Students'  
Union  
2nd Floor, 10030-107th Street,  
Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4  
800.788.9041 ext. 3413

**Editor In Chief** Tamra Ross Low

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**THE VOICE ONLINE:  
[WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE](http://WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE)**

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# EDITORIAL PAGES

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## THIS WEEK

**A HOLE IN THE HEART:** Sara Kinninmont visits Ground Zero, and finds the site of the disaster strangely detached...

**CORK:** Shannon Maguire reports on the Canadian Olympic-Regatta, Kingston...

**THE \$3.50 PENCIL CHALLENGE:** Stacey Steele's version of the Body For Life Challenge. Anyone need to lose a few?

**WAYNE BENEDICT: THE HARRIED STUDENT:** Think you're too busy? Try telling that to Wayne! Congratulation, Wayne, on finding the path to your dream!

**AUSU NEEDS NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS, AND AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!:** Read the AUSU This Month column in this issue for information on how to join council, or see the posting for the Executive Director job, also in this issue.

## What is the value of an AU degree?

A rather startling item on the AU website front page this week reports that - are you ready for this? - tuition fees across Canada are rising!

According to the report, which takes information from Statistics Canada, Canadian tuition fees have almost doubled. It is not stated in what time frame this doubling was to have occurred, but since the accompanying chart shows rises in Alberta tuitions since 1994-95, I assume that we're looking at about a 10 year time frame.

The report also notes that "Canadian students face an average increase of 7.4%." The time frame for this number is also absent, but a glance at the August 12, 2003 Stats Can document titled "University tuition fees, 2003/04" shows that this 7.4% increase, as you might suspect, is in comparison to last year's rates.

You may wonder, though, why AU would post a report on such a seemingly obvious topic, which highlights the hardships of being a post-secondary student. A glance at the accompanying chart, however, solves the mystery. There is a silver lining for Alberta students, in that tuition increases at the four Alberta Universities are below the national average, although AU is only below by 0.1% with an overall 7.3% increase. The increases at the other three Alberta universities are: U of A, 6.87%; U of C, 6.3%, and U of L, 7.0%.

AU, however, has often stressed that the actual tuition increase is much lower for a majority of AU students, due to the lowering of the out of province differential fee affecting all Canadian students outside Alberta. This, in effect, made the out of province tuition increase only 2.6% for this year.

In his recent address to AU students, AU President Dominique Abrioux mentioned the 2.6% figure several times, noting that the increase is lower than the Canadian Price Index (CPI) by 0.3%. However, it must be remembered that out of province students will in fact be subject to the exact same 7.3% increase as Alberta students, and that it is the out of province fee that has been reduced, not tuition.

So out of province students might ask, what's the difference? In terms of your pocketbook, there is none. Whether you assume your tuition only rose 2.6%, or you assume it rose 7.3% with a reduction in the differential fee, the end cost is the same. There is a subtle difference, however, that may become significant in coming years. Let me quote a few lines from Dr. Abrioux's speech:

*"... in 03/04 that more than half of Athabasca University's undergraduate students only saw their total tuition fee increase by 2.6%. It's true, that Alberta students saw their total tuition fee increase by 7.32%, but Alberta students represent less than 50% of our undergrads. The other 50% saw their fee increase by 2.6%. Why would you as AUSU, which is an organization that supports all students, why would you support or try to get the Government not to support, not put in place an exception for Athabasca's distance education courses, when more than half of your members are going to be way better off than otherwise."*

When Dr. Abrioux refers to the government placing "an exception for Athabasca's distance education courses," he is referring to the proposal that distance ed courses be exempt from the Alberta tuition cap which regulates how much tuition may be raised in a year. You can see the AU website or any recent Voice issue for more information on this topic, but I'll assume that most readers are quite aware of the tuition deregulation issue by now.

Dr. Abrioux's argument seems to be that if AU is exempt from the new tuition policy, it will be able to continue to offer these very low tuition increases to out-of-province students. And in fact, there is still room to do this. Out of province students will still be paying a \$55 per 3-credit course differential fee. If AU is to reduce this fee in coming years, then the effective out-of-province tuition hikes will be lower than they are in Alberta. The danger in confusing reductions in the tuition fee with reductions in the out-of-province fee, is that the out-of-province fee can only be reduced to zero, and after that point it will no longer be able to be used to reduce effective increases for non-Alberta students.

It does seem, however, that much of the wording used by AU and Dr. Abrioux suggests that the two are the same, and this implies that out-of-province students many enjoy lower tuition hikes indefinitely. Students, and AUSU, are being urged to support the tuition deregulation clause on the basis of the very low tuition increase for out of province students this year. The implication is that this trend will continue, but clearly this can only happen for so long. Also, when the out of province fee is reduced, AU cannot give up that extra money. It has to come from somewhere, whether it's tuitions for local students, fundraising [which has been meagre], or other types of academic fees. One look at the increases in the course extension fee over the last few years gives a clue as to where some of that money is coming from. Given that a very large number of AU students extend courses at least once, it's a sure source of extra cash with little additional outlay of resources.

The question we in Alberta must ask - though Dr. Abrioux has vehemently denied that out of province students cost Albertans a dime - is was the overall tuition increase raised more than was originally planned in order to accommodate the reduction in the out of province fee? And if so, will this be a continuing trend?

One point that Dr. Abrioux did make very clear throughout his speech, was that comparing AU to other, traditional universities is much like comparing apples to oranges. His actual words were, "it's like trying to put a round peg into a square hole." I expect he meant something to the reverse, but you get the picture.

And he's right. We can't compare AU to other universities.

At another point, Dr. Abrioux insisted that we must also be consistent in how we judge AU tuition increases. When councillor Shirley Barg asked Dr. Abrioux why he was not including graduate students when he spoke about the percentage of AU students who are visiting students, Dr. Abrioux responded: "You can't have it both

ways. You can't say you want to use it [data on graduate students] when you can, when it's helpful, and you don't want to use it when it's not."

While I do not necessarily agree with Dr. Abrioux that the issues on which AUSU has asked that graduate data be omitted are in any way related to the issue at hand, I do agree that consistency is key when making assessments of university policy, and it is also key when assessing the relative quality of an AU education.

So how do we, as AU students, compare our tuition rates to those at other schools?

Dr. Abrioux says that we cannot compare AU to other schools, yet when he talks about the relative value of AU tuition, comparisons abound. Dr. Abrioux's first point, in fact, regarding AU tuition fees was that "our tuition fees are currently the lowest of Alberta universities." But if we are not the same kind of institution, then is this even relevant?

He also said that if the tuition fee policy under bill 43 includes distance ed courses at AU, then "we will not to be able to increase our tuition fees by as much as the other Alberta universities next year even though our tuition fees are currently the lowest, and the lowest by quite a bit." Again, I ask the same question.

Not only are comparisons to other universities used quite frequently by AU in order to put AU tuition fees in perspective, but Dr. Abrioux also warns that AU must keep their fees in line with other schools or run the risk that an AU education might be devalued if fees become too low. He says that "if tuition at Athabasca gets significantly lower than that by the other provincial providers, the public will make connections between quality and price, and will consequently not value your Athabasca University education as much as that provided by the other three universities." I have heard this argument from Dr. Abrioux a number of times, although he does stress that this is not a very significant factor in any decisions regarding tuition increases.

Clearly, comparisons to other universities are paramount in the eyes of AU administration, and, we are told, in the eyes of the public.

But is this true?

Dr. Abrioux insists that the public makes connections between price and quality, and this might be true, but if so I have never seen one shred of evidence to support this. In fact, by this reasoning the public must be convinced that a degree from DeVry is far superior to one from the U of C or the U of A.

I think one way to address this question is to look at tuition across the country. It has always been known that tuition in many provinces is much cheaper than in others, but I have never, ever heard it said that the schools in the provinces where tuition is lower are inferior. In fact, until B.C. removed its tuition freeze a couple of years ago their universities had comparatively low rates, which have risen astronomically since the freeze was lifted. No one seems to feel that their schools are improving as the rates rise.

I'm not sure there is any validity the price=quality argument at all. Tuition rates vary from school to school, from province to province, and, increasingly, from faculty to faculty. I don't think that people see a school of lower rates and assume that it's not a very good school. In fact, it is well known that many of the private schools that offer quick, lower quality degrees -- especially technical degrees -- can be extremely expensive.

When people see a school with a lower tuition, they might assume that the lower rates are due to the location of the school, or in the case of a distance University, that lower rates are simply the result of fewer infrastructure costs. In fact, many students are under the impression that because Athabasca University does not have as many buildings to heat, clean and maintain, that their rates should be lower.



I do realize that one factor many students are not aware of, is that AU actually receives significantly less government funding for infrastructure than do the other universities. This makes it very difficult for AU to reflect its lower infrastructure costs in lower tuition. My point, however, is that of most students as assume that a distance University can function with less money, so it is highly unlikely that people are going to view a lower tuition rate at AU as indicative of a lower quality of education.

What is more important, however, is the actual quality of the AU education, as opposed to the perceived quality. How does an AU degree compare to those from other universities? Is not simple question to answer, and this is yet another reason that AU should not be comparing tuition rates to other universities, but should stick to discussing its own financial needs. It is true that in terms of the training and professionalism of the faculty we are probably on par with any other University in Canada. Most AU students agree that the tutors are top-notch, and in general the course materials are also excellent. We also have benefits that that students in other schools do not, such as flexible hours, the ability to extend courses, and year-round enrolment.

Nevertheless, there are many ways in which AU students are and will remain disadvantaged. As mentioned in a recent editorial, AU students are at a great disadvantage in terms of research opportunities. For anyone considering Masters studies, this can, in fact, devalue an AU degree much more so than any concerns about under-pricing might do. There are other factors that might make a person willing to pay less for AU, including the lack of access to a physical university library, access to a university store which sells software at academic pricing and academic books [yes, at AU books are included, but what if you want more!], the lack of a student health plan, fitness club, and all the other amenities of physical campus.

So how do we gauge all of these factors, and determine if an AU degree should cost the same as any other University? I would suggest that we can't. While for some the lack of research opportunities may be a very significant factor rendering the AU degree distinctly inferior, for others this isn't an issue. For many, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

What this all comes down to is what Dr. Abrioux himself has continued to say, and that is that AU is not like other universities.

So why does AU spends so much time comparing its tuition to that of other schools? And why in the hell do we continue to hear that if AU tuition is too low in comparison with other universities, people might not value our degrees. Are we trying to project that AU is different, or are we trying to project that AU is the same? And if we are to continue to compare AU on the same level as other universities, are we running a losers' race?

When I became the editor of the voice, I was told that I won the position because of my vision for the paper. It was, quite simply, that are paper would never succeed if we continued trying to be like other University newspapers. I felt, and still do, that by embracing our uniqueness we could not only compete with other papers, but perhaps one day we could even become something much better. I believe the same is necessary for Athabasca University. As Dr. Abrioux said, we can't have it both ways. If AU is to be exempt from the tuition fee policy because it is so different from other universities, then I'd like to stop hearing about how our tuition compares to other universities, and hear instead how our current tuition fees are relevant to the quality of education we're receiving today, and to the AU mandate to make University accessible for all.

**Tamra Ross Low**  
**Editor in Chief**

## TRANSCRIPTS OF DOMINIQUE ABRIOUX'S ADDRESS TO AUSU NOW ONLINE

Finally, for those who could not make it to the AUSU council meeting where AU president Dominique Abrioux addressed the students with AU's perspective on the new Alberta tuition fee policy, the files are online. You can listen to Dr. Abrioux's address via some rather rough sounding but decipherable mp3 files, or you can read the transcripts I spent the last week typing up for your illumination!

Better yet, use both and learn more than you ever wanted to know about tuition deregulation for distance education courses. This is without doubt the biggest issue facing AU students today, and probably in the past several years. Don't be left in the dark - learn more, and gain some insight into what the future might hold for AUSU.

The files, plus some supporting documentation provided by Dr. Abrioux, can be found on the AUSU website, here: <http://www.ausu.org/multimedia>

Once you listen to or read transcripts of the speech, send your comments to The Voice for inclusion in an upcoming Sounding Off column where I will print students' responses to Dr. Abrioux's comments.

## THE FIRST VOICE WRITING CONTEST

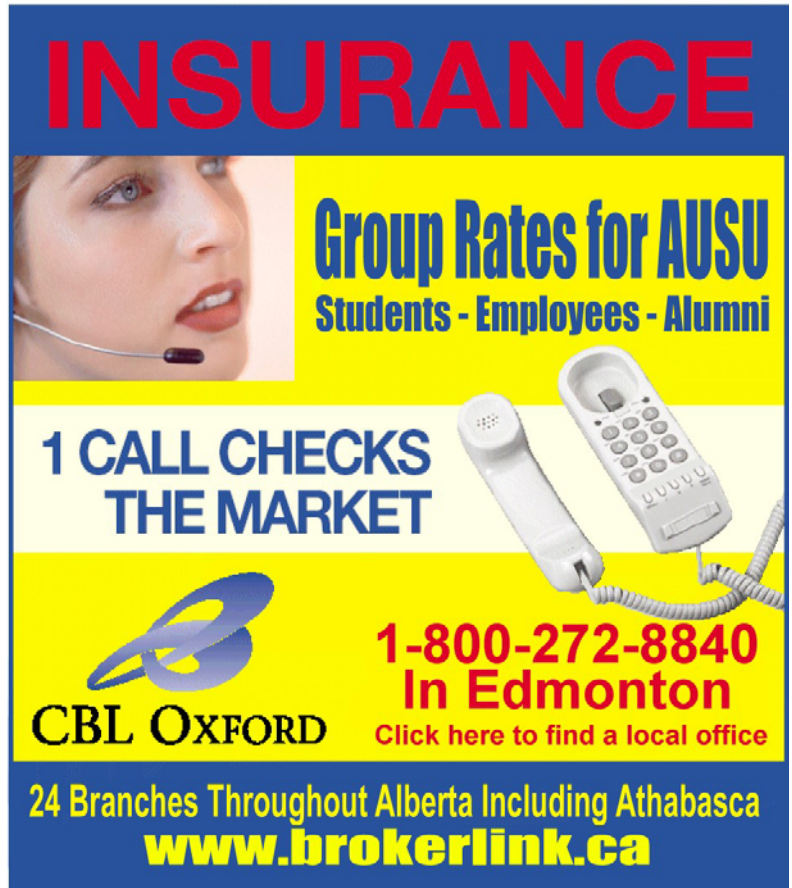
See this issue for full details of the first Voice writing contest. Good luck to all entrants. Please ensure that you differentiate between items submitted for the contest, and those submitted for immediate publication!

## FICTION WANTED

The Voice fiction feature has become popular, but submissions have been slow. Send us your best fiction today, and it might become our next feature.

## ATTENTION BUDDING WRITERS

The Voice needs some new Voices! We know you have plenty to say, so why not get paid for it. Send us a writing sample or article for submission and you might be published in an upcoming issue. It's fun, it's easy, and it pays. Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more details.



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## THE FIRST VOICE MAGAZINE WRITING CONTEST!

\$600 in scholarships to be awarded  
\$300 each in the fiction and non-fiction categories

### Write for The Voice and win money for your education.

The Voice is launching its very first writing contest, with categories for both fiction, and non fiction.

**Non-Fiction:** In 1500 words or less, tell us what you would do if you were the President of Athabasca University. Feel free to use research or statistics in your article [with proper citations], or write a creative opinion piece. Don't just write a critique of AU - tell us what you would do to make a difference and to make distance education even better!

**Fiction:** Free form - write a 1500 word or less fiction submission in any genre or any format. Short stories, poetry, a scene from a play, even a comic. Be creative!

Please read the contest rules and regulations and submission guidelines very carefully to ensure you are not disqualified. Good luck!

### Rules and Regulations:

- Entrants must be students of Athabasca University. Student status will be confirmed with the AU registrar. Please ensure that the registrar has your current address and contact information.
- All entries become the property of The Voice. Winning entries will be published in an upcoming Voice issue. The Voice reserves the right to print non-winning entries at a rate of remuneration in accordance with current Voice freelance submission rates. The Voice may use information from non-fiction entries to create a composite article about what entrants would do as president of AU. No remuneration will be provided for such use.
- All decisions regarding this contest and the selection of winners remain with the judging panel and are final and binding.
- AU, AUSU, and Voice staff or council members are not eligible for the contest.
- Entries will be judged by a panel to be selected by the Voice Editor, and this panel may include: AU students, AU tutors, and/or AUSU council members. The panel will include at least 3 members.
- The Voice Editor will collect articles and oversee the judging, but will not be a judge.
- Entries must be original works which have not been printed or published elsewhere, and must not be course assignment papers or derivatives of.
- Entries must not contain any information that would make the identity of the author evident to judges. To insure fairness, all entries will be forwarded to the judging panel with a reference number attached, but no personally identifying information will be forwarded. The Voice Editor will keep the identity of the authors private until the contest closes. The Voice editor will keep a record of the authors of submissions, and will be the sole owner of this list.
- Entries will not be edited for grammar, spelling, or content, although The Voice Editor may black out any personally identifying information contained within the submission. Otherwise, entries will be forwarded to the judging panel, as is.
- **The deadline for submissions in both categories will be October 15, 2003. The winner will be announced by November 10, 2003. The Voice reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.**
- One grand prize winner will be selected in both the fiction and non-fiction categories. If no entries are received in one of the categories, the prize money will be returned to the Voice scholarship budget. Prizes will be awarded in the form of a cheque, payable in Canadian funds.
- The Voice reserves the right to add additional, secondary prizes.

- The Voice is not responsible for lost emails. The Voice editor will confirm receipt of all entries by email. Follow up if you do not receive a reply.
- All entrants agree to allow their name and city to be printed, along with their submission, should it be selected as a winning entry. No further remuneration will be paid to the contest winner when their entry is printed.
- Entrants will be asked to sign a standard Release and Indemnity form; each prize winner agrees to release the Sponsor and its agents from any liability in connection with the prizes awarded in this contest.
- Any entrant found to be tampering with the contest results, or attempting to influence any of the judging members, or using any forums or other public communications media to advise others of which entry is theirs will be disqualified; or if The Voice editor determines, at her sole discretion, that any other form of tampering has been attempted, that entrant will be disqualified.
- Where applicable, this contest is subject to all federal, provincial and municipal laws. Contest void where prohibited by law.

## Submission Guidelines:

- Your submission must be an electronic file, sent as an attachment to email. Submissions sent as the body of an email will not be accepted. Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) if you require instructions on how to attach a file to an email.
- Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format [.doc], rich text format [.rtf] or plain text format [.txt]. If you use a Word Processor other than Word or work on a Mac computer, you can save a file in one of these alternate formats using the 'save as' function and selecting the desired format on the save menu. Contact The Voice editor if you require assistance in formatting your submission.
- All entries must be under 1500 words, due to judging time constraints. Length will be determined by the Word Count feature in Microsoft Word. Your References and Citations section will not be included in the word count.
- Entries should not include unnecessary formatting such as drop caps, graphics [unless the graphic is integral to the work], or unusual fonts. Times New Roman or Arial 12 point font are preferred. Entries must be text - scans of hand written or typed documents will not be accepted.
- All entries forwarded to the judging panel will be converted to the same file format, font style and font size.
- Submit your entry as an email attachment. The email should include the following information: Your full name, your AU student ID number, an email address and telephone number where we may contact you, your home address, the title of your entry, and whether you are submitting a fiction or non-fiction entry. Make sure non-fiction entries are based on the topic question detailed above. Fiction entries can be on any topic you like. Do not include your contact information within your article - but be sure to include a title. Your contact information and article will be coded, and filed separately.
- Entries will be judged on the following criteria:
  - Non Fiction entries: will be judged on originality, creativity, the plausibility of your suggestions, and how well your support your suggestions with data or argument. You will also be judged on the presentation of your article, including professionalism, proper spelling, grammar and syntax, and readability.
  - Fiction entries: will be judged on creativity, entertainment value, and the originality or your writing style. Regardless of the genre you choose, you will be judged on the effectiveness of your piece, and your technical writing skills.



## AUSU STUDENT GIFT PACKS NOW AVAILABLE

AUSU students can now order their student gift packs, free courtesy of your students' union.

The packs are filled with AUSU logo items to help you study, relax, and learn more about AUSU.

Contact [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org) to order your gift pack today!

# A HOLE IN THE HEART

*Sara Kinninmont*



Ground Zero - the sign reads:  
"The human spirit is not measured by the  
size of the act, but by the size of the heart"

A few months ago, I found myself, quite unexpectedly, planning my first trip to New York City. For weeks, I pored over travel guides, and checked out websites, all in an effort to compile a must-see list for myself. With only four days in the city, I wanted to make sure I was organised. I didn't want to miss anything.

As the departure date neared, the list grew and grew. I had no idea how I was going to fit it all in. The list included things like SoHo and TriBeCa, Greenwich Village, NYU, Washington Square, Chinatown and Little Italy, Times Square, Fifth Avenue, Central Park, and Rockefeller Center. I definitely knew what I did and didn't want to see, except for one place: Ground Zero.

In all honesty, I wasn't sure I wanted to go to Ground Zero at all. My feelings were ambiguous. On one hand, I wanted to go so I could comprehend the enormity of it, to try and reconcile the images I'd seen repeated again and again on CNN; yet, at the same time, I was worried that I would be going for the wrong reasons. I didn't want it to become just another must-see on my list, somewhere between the Statue of Liberty and the Staten Island Ferry. It seemed crass and disrespectful. Sort of like one of those people who slows down when they drive by an accident on the highway, except on a much grander scale of course. In the end, I decided to leave it up to chance. I didn't plan on going, but I didn't rule it out.

After two days of exploring Manhattan and loving every minute of it, it became harder and harder to ignore the fact that there was a hole in the heart of the city; a hole that was now as much a part of the city as any of the places that had made it on my list. Finally, on the third morning, I decided to go to Lower Manhattan and see it for myself. I got off the subway, made my way up the stairs, and headed in the direction of where the World Trade Center had once stood. As I walked, I worried that I simply wouldn't feel anything. Would I be one of those people who after growing up with excessive violence in movies and on TV would be unmoved by the visible aftermath of its manifestation in real life? Would I be numb to it? That truly scared me the most. Being a twenty-something who had never known life without TV, and who is quickly forgetting life before the internet, I hoped that seeing Ground Zero would help me dissolve the disconnect that occurs when you are bombarded with violent imagery every day.

One minute I was walking along the sidewalk surrounded by skyscrapers, the next I was faced with towering metal fencing. From a distance, it looked no different than any other construction site, except that many of the buildings surrounding it were enshrouded in black mesh tarps, almost as though they were mourning the losses they had witnessed.

Two years ago, we saw history being rewritten before our eyes. We witnessed, from the comfort of our living rooms, a day that will go down in history. September 11th 2001 is now one of those days where anyone you talk to can tell you where they were when they heard (I actually found out when I called one of my Athabasca tutors for a phone quiz, and she told me).

As I looked around, I tried to come to grips with the fact that thousands of people had lost their lives in this very



square block. The images I'd seen of the planes, smoke, fire, people running and crying and screaming, of people hanging from windows, jumping out of windows, of the towers collapsing, of people trying to outrun a wall of debris, of firemen, of policemen, and later of families crying and searching, of missing persons' posters, of hope, of fear, of anger, of terror; later yet, of clean up efforts, and memorials, and remembrance. All these images swarmed through my mind, yet as I stared down into the huge hole in front of me, it all seemed unfathomable. How could those horrible things have happened here? I simply could not reconcile the images I'd seen for days, on a screen in my living room, with the scene I saw before me. They seemed so far removed from each other. While I remembered the horrible images I'd seen, I felt a myriad of emotions; yet as I peered through the fence at a cross made of steel girders, I felt little.

I looked around me. A sadness overtook me, and not for the obvious reasons. All around the fence there were people with cameras around their necks jockeying for position, trying to get pictures. To my left there was an Asian family posing in front of the fence with big smiles of their faces, as though they were at Disneyland. All along the sidewalk opposite the fence were stalls selling 9/11 memorabilia, and certainly no lack of people willing to shell out money for a flag, a pin, or even a glossy magazine featuring pictures from the tragic day. It made me sick to see blatant profiteering and consumerism thinly veiled as patriotism and mourning. The more I looked around the more disillusioned I became.

As I walked down along the water towards Battery Park, I had mixed emotions. I was glad that I'd been, in that I may have always wondered if I hadn't. At the same time, I was extremely disappointed. I felt as though I had just witnessed some sort of sick roadside attraction. If anything, the visit to Ground Zero had made my emotional disconnection from the event even greater.

The next morning, I got up determined to enjoy my last full day in the city. I took the subway over to Greenwich Village for an early breakfast and a day of exploring. It was as I was walking around that I came across a metal fence, nothing like the one at Ground Zero, yet related to it all the same. Covering the fence were little hand-painted ceramic tiles, which looked as though they had been painted by children. Each one depicted an image that revealed the feelings of each child in relation to September 11th.

It was as I stood looking at these tiles that I truly felt a connection between the horrific images of that day and the feelings of the community that had had to deal with it. The simplicity and beauty of them seemed so far removed from the glossy commemorative magazines and buttons being sold for a profit, which is what made them all the more powerful. The tiles were simply depictions of feelings in relation to the terror of that day. I was, in essence, looking at a display of feelings. The fact that, in a city of millions, these tiles have remained untouched and intact is a testament to the power they hold. It was right there in Greenwich Village, in front of that fence, miles away from Ground Zero, that I truly felt the hole that that day had left in my heart, and the hearts of all who witnessed it.




*Photos provided by the author*




## SUDS CONFERENCE JULY, 2003

*Debbie Jabbour*




As noted last week ([v11 i35](#)) in my first report on the Student Union Development Symposium (SUDS), the conference sessions were relatively short, most of them being panel discussions, where information was shared by SU executives about what was happening in their province, and the types of things that worked for them when lobbying. They were all followed by brief question periods. Most in attendance were newly-elected executives with single year terms, so a lot of the information presented was geared towards providing basic overviews of the many issues that executives would be dealing with. Much of the focus also was on issues that affect campus-based full time students. I found that I was already familiar with a lot of the information presented, but there were still some interesting discussions, and we had plenty of opportunity to raise the profile of Athabasca University and further validate distance education as an important alternative post secondary education option.




The first conference session was a panel discussion with Robert South, Government relations officer for CASA and Ian Boyko, chair of the CFS. Robert gave an interesting overview of the Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP), explaining how costs are assessed and highlighting some of the problems with qualifying criteria. He stated that the CSLP rewards students with the highest costs (living away from home) rather than those who try to economize, and listed several key problems, including:


- earnings are clawed back, with a maximum of \$50 a week allowed. Merit-based scholarships also result in reduction of loan amounts.
- parental contribution is expected, and assets must be liquidated.
- inaccurate measures of need, no allowance for essential capital items such as a computer.
- loan limits have not kept up with rising costs, leaving 45% of students at the maximum.
- For 50% of students, average debt after a 4-year degree is \$21-22,000 and most take 5-10 years to repay their student loan.



An interesting piece of information Robert provided was regarding the rigorous audit system in place in Ontario. The \$50 weekly earning limit is strictly enforced, and the government does audits even after students have graduated. Should they decide that students earned more than the maximum during any period of their study, they re-assess the loan and demand immediate repayment of that portion of the student loan.



Robert commented that Edulinx, the company that processes loans, is owned by CIBC and is a private, for-profit company. Although repayment does not start until 6 months after graduation, interest accumulates immediately, at either prime plus 2.5% floating, or prime plus 5% fixed (current prime is 4.75%, with mortgage rates averaging around 5-6%). He concluded by noting that the whole process of obtaining a loan, repayment, and applying for debt-reduction relief is more complex than preparing a tax return - and the majority of Canadians pay someone else to do their taxes!





Ian Boyko began by referring to the "Youth in Transition" survey, which showed that 100,000 18-20 year olds do not go on to post-secondary education, citing financial barriers, and another 21,000 drop out due to financial reasons. Students from low-income families represent a significant portion of these numbers, and he cited several other studies that indicate half of low income students do not pursue PSE, and enrollment from students with family earnings less than \$40,000 has dropped from 22% to 15% over the past two years.

Ian commented that the Millennium Scholarship project builds on the premise that "if you tell people they are not poor, they will think they can go to university." He reinforced Robert's discussion of the CSLP deficiencies and failure to meet student needs through: skewed assessment, parental contribution requirements, and failure to adjust for cost of living and program costs, adding that the government says it "doesn't matter how much debt is accumulated, but whether students can pay it back." According to Ian, the answer should not be more loans or increased loan limits, since this simply results in higher tuition. A point was brought up during the question period that some universities are negotiating arrangements with banks that would allow student access to private loans, something that could also potentially result in huge tuition increases.

Ian then discussed the Registered Educational Savings Program (RESP), which he calls a "wealth-based" system which rewards those who can afford to save - and the more you can afford to save, the more the government adds! The RESP is a boon for the banks that benefits a select few, and Ian noted that it costs 1 billion dollars to run each year. If the RESP were eliminated and converted to grants, it could give \$5000 to 200,000 students; if converted into reduced tuition, it would result in a 25% reduction for all. (According to Statistics Canada, there were around 600,000 full time university students in 1999).

An important issue for us as Athabasca University student representatives, is the financial needs of part time students, which the CSLP does not address. Ian commented that part time student funding was not a government priority and little research was even being done in that regard, since in the government's mind part time students are usually older, with different needs than traditional campus-based students. He referred to some statistics from the Canada Learning Institute which indicated that 80% of full time students attend a public post secondary institute, while 60% of part time students are at a private for-profit facility.



The themes Robert and Ian brought up were reiterated throughout all the other sessions. Tuition was also the topic of the afternoon's panel discussion between Oana Chirila, AMS President, UBC; Matt Lannan, VP Education, McMaster SU; and Johanne Galarneau, President, Dalhousie SU.

Johanne opened the discussion by noting that Nova Scotia has the highest tuition in Canada; the greatest number of PSE institutions per capita; and receives a significant number of out-of-province students, who are subject to a large differential fee (50% at Dalhousie). There is very little debate or



consultation with students on tuition, although some students commented later that the consultation process often felt like students were just being humoured in any case.

Oana then gave us a history of British Columbia's tuition freeze, adding that since it has been lifted students are facing compound increases of 60-70%. Student groups in BC had actively lobbied government for years, and were successful in keeping the freeze up until 2001. At that time the presidents' council made a submission to the government, convincing them that the freeze was affecting attendance, viability and quality, and on February 18, 2002, tuition was deregulated. UBC immediately proposed a 68% increase over three years, and although student protests managed to limit the increase to 28%, the university fought back, arguing that they needed the same tuition as other institutions across Canada in order to be perceived as a quality university. Two more tuition hikes followed - 23% in Sept 2002 and 30% in May 2003. What was the result? Oana noted that class sizes have increased, applications for student aid have jumped, and students at UBC are coming from a higher socioeconomic status - yet UBC has fallen in McLean's ranking!

Another UBC student representative provided a lengthy and detailed explanation of what had occurred during the 80's and 90's with BC's educational system, and how students, with the help of the CFS, forced the government to freeze tuition in 1995. Many institutions tried to get around the freeze by hiking ancillary fees, resulting in a court challenge, with students suing the university for violation of legislation. The students won the case, and ancillary fees were included in the freeze, until a government change in 2000 when the freeze came off. The point was made that a number of institutions had managed a balanced budget without increasing tuition during the period of the freeze, but that the government obligated them to increase tuition anyway. Several students indicated that in BC there is a culture of fear and intimidation, with university administrators unable to speak out against the government or tuition increases.



Matt Lannan spoke about the challenges in Ontario, saying that the Mike Harris government is "hard to get things out of." He stated that although students successfully lobbied for a 2% cap over five years for all PSE institutions, Ontario is the worst in terms of per capita funding. One issue is student financial need bursaries. Universities are supposed to offer 30% of their budget for needs-based bursaries, and if the university raises money, the government matches it. This system favours universities that are better equipped to fundraise, resulting in unequal distribution of funds.

International student tuition is also an issue, with universities bringing in substantial increases without consultation (the argument being that international students are not Canadian taxpayers and don't need consultation). This is similar across Canada, with international students being perceived as a market revenue source.

Federal transfer payments came up for the first time, and this was another theme which would be reiterated throughout the sessions. Feds fund 10-15% towards education, but "pass the buck over to the provinces," through transfer payments, making Canada one of the only industrialized countries where the federal government does not take direct responsibility for PSE.

# NATURE NOTES:

from the backyard to the biosphere

By Zoe Dalton

## Ode To Wapato



Somehow, again, we're heading towards the end of summer. The long, light-hearted days are already shortening and the lakes and ponds will soon begin to cool. We're heading back into fall's months of busyness when we just don't have time for those hour-long swims, for noticing each quarter degree change in the water's temperature.

I mourn the end of summer swimming days. Averse to over-chlorinated pools, I try to get my fill of the drink in those summer months when nothing feels so good as slipping into the silky northern waters and staying in until hungry friends, impatiently waving at the shore, call you in to join the party. I love my swims, and I know I am not alone in this passion. Water plays a big part in Canadians' enjoyment of our fairer months, and for many of us, our time spent in lakes, streams and ponds can provide defining moments in our summers, if not in our lifetimes.

This summer was no exception for me, and I'd like to share with you one of those moments – a tale from my field work, and a bit of summer memory I'll now carry with me forever...

Have you ever heard of Wapato? Neither had I until this July. When the term was brought up on the first day of my summer course, I thought my professor must have been referring to a town – sounds vaguely familiar, I thought, but don't ask me to point it out on a map. Over the next couple of days, however, the import of this word began to grow on me, and by the end of my field work I couldn't believe there was a time when *Sagittaria latifolia* didn't hold a special place in my heart.

What is Wapato anyway, you probably ask. And why would some aquatic plant come to mean so much to a travelling group of nineteen students? Also known as arrowhead, for the distinctive shape of its leaves, this lovely wetland plant is found in ponds and lakes in many parts of the country. Although the leaves help to easily distinguish this plant from others, it is its underground portion that in fact gives it its cultural significance, and that originally set us off on our Wapato expedition.

In a similar fashion to our domestic potato, only in a wetland rather than a dryland environment, the Wapato produces a network of edible tubers. Functioning as storage organs for the plant, these tubers are stock-full of nutrients and carbohydrates. What the potato was for Europeans is comparable to what the Wapato was in the diet of the Secwepemc people of Interior BC, the area my colleagues and myself were studying. However, where not long ago entire villages could, year after year in the same location, harvest enough Wapato to feed everyone plus a few, there are now very few plants to be found. The Wapato has declined considerably in distribution and abundance, and where found, it is typically of very small size. According to our expert Secwepemc elder, a Wapato harvest from present populations would yield a quantity of little use to the harvester.

But our group did not walk the back field toward the pond to harvest the Wapato that evening. We did not remove shoes and socks as the ground filled beneath our feet because we wanted to collect the plants' tubers. We didn't roll higher and higher, then finally take our pants right off as the water became waist-deep to satisfy

The final discourse of the day was given by Dr. Donald Fisher, UBC Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education, and addressed the topic of "State, Industry and University Relationships with the PSE System." Dr. Fisher spoke of the trends towards commercialization and commodification of education as increased investment from industry occurs. He used the term "market ideology" to describe the "entrepreneur university" where commercially viable knowledge is a commodity produced for exchange. There are many implications of this trend, including: greater stratification as research universities become more differentiated from teaching universities; privileged research in disciplines with greater commercial value; increased accountability to the private sector for performance; and more restricted access to university to upper and middle class only, with disadvantaged students falling even lower on the scale. The picture Dr. Fisher painted was rather bleak, particularly since the commodification process appears inevitable.

*All photos by the author. The two larger scenic photos are of the UBC campus.*

## Next week: Day two

### References

SUDS 2003 (Student Union Development Symposium)  
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Alma Mater Society - Student Society at UBC:  
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<http://www.statcan.ca/english/sdds/4435.htm>  
<http://www.pisa.gc.ca/yits.shtml>

Stats Canada, numbers of university students:  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/educ03a.htm>

CESG Canada Education Savings Grant Program  
[http://www.hrdc.gc.ca/hrib/learnlit/cesg/013/001\\_e.shtml](http://www.hrdc.gc.ca/hrib/learnlit/cesg/013/001_e.shtml)

Loan info  
[www.canlearn.ca](http://www.canlearn.ca)

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*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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CAUS: <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/caus/alpha/>  
Tuition Cause: <http://tc.su.ualberta.ca/>

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any physical hunger. It was not due to our stomachs that we paid so little heed to the thick muck of the pond's bottom, its oozing between our toes...

We had come to this pond to see the restoration of the Wapato. We had come with wide eyes and hoping hearts to see the now limited plant in its native habitat, to find if the replanting efforts of the previous year had paid off, to see if the Wapato was recovering, and to find hope that one day it may again be harvested by those who once relied so heavily upon it for survival.

It was our group of nineteen, trudging pantless through the murky waters and mucky bottom of the pond, eaten alive by hungry mosquitoes, and thinking of only one thing – the Wapato; growing here, spreading there, sprouting and popping up between exclosures and decidedly making its mark again where once it had reigned supreme.

Itchy, mucky and wet; elated, admiring and in awe at this little sign of recovery and healing – this is my highlight, my new favourite water memory, this year's taste of summer's delights. Thanks to Wapato, thanks to the sweet pond it grows in, thanks to summer months and times in the field. Another memory to keep, another story to share...

**Photo Credit:**

Global Forest Science: Restoring Arrowhead in the Thompson Valley, B.C.

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*Zoe Dalton is a graduate of York University's environmental science program, and is currently enjoying working towards a Master of Arts in Integrated Studies with Athabasca U. She can be reached for comments or questions at [zk\\_dalton@hotmail.com](mailto:zk_dalton@hotmail.com).*

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## AUSU THIS MONTH

### IMPORTANT NOTICE TO STUDENTS:

AUSU Council currently has three positions open, that we are seeking to fill for the final six months of the current term. In accordance with our bylaws and policies, Council can appoint students to fill these positions by a majority vote. Any interested student is invited to submit an application to [president@ausu.org](mailto:president@ausu.org), including the following:

- a current resume
- program enrolled in at AU and student I.D. number
- a brief letter detailing your reasons for wanting to join Council.

All applications will be considered equally, but preference will be given to students who have already actively participated in AUSU Council meetings and committees. There is no guarantee that any or all of these positions will be filled. Deadline for applications is September 12/03. For further information, please contact [president@ausu.org](mailto:president@ausu.org)

### AUSU JOB POSTING

See the News section of this paper for the job posting for the position of AUSU Executive Director. This posting can also be found on the AUSU website at <http://www.ausu.org/jobposting/index.php>

### AUSU ART CONTEST WINNER ANNOUNCED

AUSU is pleased to announce the winner of this year's art contest, which asked for submissions to be used as the cover of this year's AUSU Handbook/Planner.

It was a difficult decision this year, because all of the entries were so good, but the planner committee decided on the appropriately titled 'Teachings' by Alberta artist Chris Lynch-Aquart.



*Chris Lynch-Aquart, a member of the Cold Lake First Nations, was born in Edmonton in 1974 and raised in Calgary. Though raised in a Canadian urban setting, Chris has been most heavily influenced by South Western artists. He uses many traditional symbols and images from Native American mythology and ceremonies to express his ideas.*

*Largely self-taught, Chris has completed a two year Design and Printing program from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. He continues to work at his art and is now comfortable working in such varied media as oil, acrylic, graphite and airbrush. Chris has sold many originals and his works are on display in England, the United States and throughout Canada. In 1999, Chris was the first place winner in the annual Peace Hills Trust Native Art Contest and his work "A Tradition Carried Forever and Respected with Honour" is featured on their 2000 calendar.*

Look for Chris's painting on the cover of the planner, which should be available by the end of the year.

### AUSU IN PERSON DISCUSSION GROUPS

AUSU in-person discussion groups in Calgary, Edmonton, and Medicine Hat would like to invite students to join them in casual, coffee shop get togethers to discuss life as an AU student.

Getting together physically with fellow AU students adds to your university experience. Other students will be able to understand and relate to the joys and frustrations of distance learning. It's also a way to stay abreast of information relating to AU and the Athabasca University Students' Union.

To take part in the **Calgary** group please contact JODY at [jwaddle@telusplanet.net](mailto:jwaddle@telusplanet.net).  
To take part in the **Edmonton** areas discussion group, contact RYAN at [nicepilotdude@yahoo.ca](mailto:nicepilotdude@yahoo.ca).  
To take part in the **Medicine Hat** group, contact STACEY at [jackenna96@telusplanet.net](mailto:jackenna96@telusplanet.net).

Anyone interested in starting up a group in your area (anywhere in Canada, from small towns to major centres) please contact SANDRA at [smoore@ausu.org](mailto:smoore@ausu.org).

## **SURVEY ON AU's PROPOSED REMOVAL FROM THE TUITION CAP**

*How do you feel about AU being removed from the tuition cap?*



Athabasca University, like other universities and colleges in the province, currently falls under Alberta's tuition fee policy that enforces a ceiling on allowable tuition increases. **AU has asked the Alberta government for exemption from the tuition fee policy.** If passed, tuition increases for undergraduate courses at AU will no longer be regulated by specific government controls.

To find out how students feel about this proposed change, AUSU has placed a short survey on the AUSU web site at: <http://www.ausu.org/tuitionsurvey/index.php>. More information can also be found on this page.

To learn more about this issue, students are encouraged to visit the AUSU discussion forums [accessible from the "Message Forums" link on the AUSU front page] and to browse the past several issues of The Voice.

Please take a minute to fill out this simple survey, to ensure that the students' union is representing you.

## **CHAT WITH AUSU ONLINE**

If you have a question for AUSU, or would like to get to know your council, drop by the chat-room [accessible through the 'Message Forums' option on the AUSU home page [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org). You will need an AUSU web site account.] during one of our chat times and talk live with AUSU council members or your Voice editor. **All times are MST**

Mondays at 8:00 PM Councillor Karl Low

**More chat times to be posted soon...**

## **FEATURED TUTOR ON THE AUSU WEB SITE**

**Kim Vaughan**  
*Psychology*

Kim Vaughan is a tutor in Psychology, currently teaching three courses: Child Development (Psychology 228), Developmental Psychology (Psychology 323), and Psychology and the Mass Media (Psychology 315). Kim has been with Athabasca since 2000...

Read more at: <http://www.ausu.org/tutor/index.php>



## **NEEDED – VOLUNTEER MENTORS FOR NEW STUDENTS**

Do you remember your first few months at AU? Do you remember all the questions you had and the confusions you encountered? Every month at AU there are close to 1500 new registrations and these new students will be in the same boat you were once in. How about helping these students out by offering to be an AUSU mentor? AUSU mentors are "experienced" AU students who are willing to provide a little guidance and support to new AU students. If you are interested in participating in this new venture of AUSU's or if you'd like more information please contact Sandra Moore at [smoore@ausu.org](mailto:smoore@ausu.org)



# Canadian Olympic-training Regatta, Kingston (CORK)

*Shannon Maguire*



The Kingston Olympic Harbour (left) was barely visible on the first day of the Canadian Olympic-training Regatta, Kingston (CORK). Hundreds of sailboats came from all over the world to sail in series one, which took place from August 16-20.

The classes of boats in series one included Laser's, Laser Radial's, Laser 2's, Bytes, 29er's, 470's, 420's, Tornado's, Europe's and Fusion's. According to John Curtis, the competition in CORK was not as good as he had hoped it would be this year. He speculated that this was due to the fact that many of the top sailors are busy getting ready for the World Championships that

will be taking place in September in Cadiz, Spain. John and his partner Oskar Johansson will also be competing at the World Championships in the Tornado class, but since they are residents of Kingston they wanted to compete in their hometown event. The pair is also running a campaign for the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece and they hope to qualify for the Olympics by placing in the top 12 at the World Championships.

Despite the lower than expected number of top competitors, the event was still very busy and added quite a bit of excitement to the small town of Kingston, Ontario. There was also a larger amount of younger sailors who attended the event for the first time this year. Six young sailors, in particular, traveled all the way from Singapore and missed an entire week of high school – Singapore's school schedule runs on a time line different than ours – to sail in the Byte class. According to Daniel Li Shun Hui (one of the Singapore sailors) the sailors – made up of the top three female Byte sailors and top three male Byte sailors in Singapore – received funding from the Singapore Government to come to Canada and compete in the event.

At the end of each day during series one there was a Virtual Sailing Simulator set up by Bill Visser on behalf of Performance Sailcraft 2000 and the Canadian Yachting Association (co-owners of the simulator). Bill Visser commented that the simulator, which was designed at Melbourne University in Australia, is the only one of its kind in North America. It was designed as a training, boat development and boat conversion aid and is currently being displayed in order to introduce people to the world of sailing. The simulator was a big hit at CORK and many of the sailors who had already been out sailing all day hopped in to give it a try.



The winners of series one were Jessica Lombard from Beaconsfield, Quebec (Laser Radial Silver), Parker Shinn from San Diego, California (Laser Radial Gold), Dirk McLaughin and Dmitri McLaughin from Toronto, Ontario (Laser 2), Danielle Dube from Glenhaven, Nova Scotia (Byte Silver), Blake Warner from Newport Beach, California (Byte Gold), Thomas Hall and David Turch from the United States (470), Oskar Johansson and John Curtis from Kingston, Ontario (Tornado), James Doughty and Gareth Williams from Hamilton, Bermuda (29er), Claudia Strobelle from Toronto, Ontario

(Europe), Leigh Kempton and Katie Stork from Island Heights, New Jersey (420), Matthew Naumann from Riverside, Connecticut (Laser Silver), Andrew Cambell from San Diego, California (Laser Gold) and Jeff Boyd and Danielle Boyd from Kingston, Ontario (Fusion).



Series two of CORK, which was considerably smaller than series one, took place from August 21-24. There were only 27 boats competing in the Finn, Fireball, Flying Dutchmen, I-14 and Martin 16 classes. The harbour seemed like a ghost town after the huge crowd from series one was gone. Fortunately, the small number of boats in series two turned out to be an advantage for many of the disabled sailors in the Martin 16 class. The Martin 16 is an unsinkable sailboat that can be modified for use by people with disabilities. Some of the extra equipment currently available includes the Autohelm Windlass System, which is a modular, self-

contained, portable power-assisted steering and sheeting system and the Sip and Puff Module, which allows high-quadruplegic sailors to control the boat by breathing into a straw mounted on their chest.

There were several disabled sailors sailing in series two who benefited by the extra attention they were able to receive by the volunteers. According to Chris Rostant, a volunteer, some of them needed the assistance of volunteers to rig and de-rig their boats and others also needed help getting in and out of the boat. Several of the disabled sailors who competed in series two went on to compete in the 2003 Mobility Cup – an international regatta for sailors with disabilities – in Ottawa, Ontario.

The winners of series two were Phil Tate from Bloomington, Indiana (Finn), Robert Levy and Thomas Egli from Westmount, Quebec (Fireball), Tim Sayles and Willem Barent Wijismuller from Warrington, Pennsylvania (Flying Dutchman), Andrew Yates and Gordon Cook from Toronto, Ontario (I-14) and Steve Alvey from Calgary, Alberta (Martin 16).

#### Sources:

Canadian Olympic-training Regatta, Kingston (CORK). <http://www.cork.org>  
Martin 16: Sailing for Everyone. [www.martin16.com](http://www.martin16.com)



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# THE DAY THE CITY LIVED

Antonia Cruz



## Day 1- August 14, 2003

I looked out of my apartment window during the late afternoon. Cars were lined bumper to bumper driving north on Yonge Street. From a distance, I could hear the fire engines wailing. An ambulance was parked across the street in front of a building. Was it a traffic accident? Pedestrians scrambled back and forth aimlessly, jaywalking and ignoring all traffic signals. I looked down at the street again. There *were* no traffic signals! Doors were slamming in the apartment hallway. Beep. Hum. Beep. The smoke detectors shut down. The clock on my microwave flashed 0:00. I turned on my radio, only to hear the eerie sound of silence...

What was happening? Should I leave my apartment to investigate what was going on downstairs? Just then, the phone started to ring.

"He...ll...o," I answered in a shaky voice.

"Hi, It's Mom. I'm calling you from the payphone at the subway station. Did you know that the whole city has no electricity? There are no trains or busses. I'm stuck downtown and am about to walk home. I'll wait for you downstairs when I arrive home," answered the caller on the other end.

I hung up the phone. Panicked, I searched the cupboards for batteries and flashlights. With my flashlights in tow, I grabbed as many containers as I could to fill them up with water from the tap. As I turned on the tap, I noticed the water start to trickle in tiny droplets. Suddenly I remembered being told when I moved in that electricity was needed to pump the water onto the higher floors. Oh no! I was running out of water fast. For the next hour or so, I filled up as many containers as I could.

Before going downstairs, I phoned other relatives and neighbours, as I was concerned about their well-being. I walked down the hallway, until I came upon another neighbour down the hall.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

I stared at him in disbelief. Here was a man trying to restart his laptop computer in the middle of the hallway. What an idiot! Note to self: Someone ought to write the "Idiot's Guide to Power Outages." You would think that at a critical moment like this a computer would be the least worry on someone's mind. I wonder if he ever did get that computer started up during the power outage? I guess not.

Looking down at my watch, I knew I was running out of time before the sunset. With my flashlight in tow, I quickly ran down eighteen flights of stairs, in search of an elderly neighbour in another building whom I was concerned about. I was left in a state of awe by what appeared on the other side when I opened the emergency exit door: people of all shapes, sizes, ages, etc. were running around like mad chickens with their heads cut off across Yonge Street. Cyclists and rollerbladers criss-crossed the intersections as if they were on a racetrack course. Local business owners stood on guard for looters in their pitch-black stores.

Like everyone else, I jaywalked across the hectic street until I arrived at the front door of the neighbour's apartment. When I made it to my neighbour's building, I was greeted at the foot of stairs by a group of security personnel. I frantically explained my situation and was escorted up a darkened stairwell. When I made it to the

top of the stairwell, my elderly neighbour was surprised to find me at the door. She was relieved when she saw me, as she had been waiting alone in the dark for hours.

"Make yourself at home. Sit down on the couch. Do you want to have a glass of juice? Just before you came, I lit a couple of candles my daughter had given me. I remember when..." she said politely.

I could not believe it! Here she was, pretending as though nothing had happened. For the next couple of hours, we joked around shared old stories under the dim candlelight, while I drank a glass of lukewarm juice.

By the time I knew it, it was as pitch-black on the outside as it was on the inside. With a feeling of dread, I headed back down onto the darkened Yonge Street. There was a long lineup in front of a sushi restaurant, as the chef prepared a meal near a propane stove. Sad to say, the smell of raw fish did not appeal to my hungry stomach, and I dreaded the long walk back upstairs.

The manager of the building greeted me in front of the concierge desk in the darkened lobby.

"You only have a couple of minutes left before the hallways are completely darkened," he warned in his scruffy voice.

I quickly ran toward the open door of the dimly lit stairway. I was about halfway up the stairs, when I heard another "hum". The lights in the stairwell flickered off and on, until it became totally darkened. I could hear the tune from the *Titanic* sing into my head. Was this what it was like for the survivors during that fateful night? Slowly, I fumbled around for a couple of minutes in search of the flashlight in my pocket. Thank goodness I had only another couple flights of stairs!

When I reached my apartment door, I stared at the glass door leading out to my balcony. I could not help but notice the beautiful night sky. Was this remarkable wonder of nature hidden under the bright city lights all the time? Tired and hot, I opened the balcony door and decided to spend the rest of the night "under the stars."

"Hmmm...maybe the power outage isn't so bad after all," I thought to myself, as I turned my head upwards to witness this remarkable feat of nature.

## **Day 2 – August 15, 2003**

Specks of light flicked off and on in my face. Awakened by the light, I cracked open an eyelid to find its source. I looked up: a group of youngsters from the apartment above were aiming their flashlights on the streets below. Too exhausted to care, I fell back asleep on the balcony chair.

Another speck of light hit my face. This time, it was the bright morning sun. My stomach started to growl when I woke up. Just then, the phone started the ring. On the other end of the line was a neighbour, inviting me to barbecue the remaining food from the fridge on the rooftop garden of our apartment building.

Without much thought, I grabbed a package of day-old chicken sausages and ran down the stairs in the dark with a bottle of water and a flashlight. When I reached the garden, I asked about my neighbour's newborn baby. I was relieved when I heard that the baby was okay upstairs. Instead of staying for the barbecue, I gave the package of sausages to the neighbour and ran down the street in search of more water.

Walking down the stairs, I felt the stillness of the air. For the first time ever, the streets were deserted and barren, like a ghost town. Signs in black magic marker were posted on the windows of the local businesses. "Supermarket is closed, due to the power outage", read the supermarket sign. "Closed until further notice. Sorry



for the inconvenience," read the sign on the bank. "Closed for obvious reasons. Appointments will be rescheduled," read the sign on the on the local tattoo parlour.

Walking through the ghost town, I continued my search for water and batteries. I walked down the street in a desperate attempt to find anyone who would have a bottle of water. A darkened row of empty shelves greeted me as I passed by a variety store. Walking inside, a few boxes of crackers and canned food lay on the shelves.

"Do you have any water?" I asked the three ladies who were stationed at the checkout.

They shook their heads in the direction of the door, so I walked out of the store and back out into the ghost town. Further down the street I walked, until I arrived at another variety store. A crowd had gathered in front of the second store. I pushed my way through the crowd and ran toward the store's freezer aisle. Pushing aside a box of slippers I slid open the freezer door to check for bottle of water. Finding none, I grabbed three bottles of Pepsi at the very bottom of the freezer and headed toward the back of the store in search of batteries. Eureka! I found a stack of batteries located in a small plastic bin near the back. Digging through the box with three other people, I found three packets of AA batteries, as the other three people continued to search for C batteries.

I quickly headed to the front of the store again, to pay for my purchases. Another crowd had gathered at the man behind the cashier desk, demanding flashlights and candles, which were dwindling in supply. A rowdy teenager yelled at the cashier, demanding the price of pop should be lowered. Afraid of being in the centre of a dreadful confrontation, I grabbed my purchases and ran out the door.

I ran down the street in the direction of my apartment building, and went inside a third variety store, in search of water. Unfortunately, there were no bottles of water left. Sticky and tired, I gave up my search and walked back up the stairs. I was surprised to find a group of neighbours at the lobby of my apartment reading the newspaper. After chatting with a couple of neighbours, I followed one onto the second floor rooftop garden, before I had to make my long trek upstairs.

When I arrived at the garden, I emptied my Pepsi bottles and refilled them with water from the fountain in the exercise room. On my way back up the stairs, I met a woman who walked with me up the stairs with a candle.

"Those bags look heavy. Here, let me help you up the stairs with the light from my candle," she said.

Guided by the light, I found my way back home. Was it a nightmare? Or a good dream? Sometimes it takes the worst situation to make find the best out of a person, or vice versa. After all, it is when we lose something that we realize we have taken for granted what we really have. Perhaps on that hot summer day, the city did not die. Rather, it was the day the city lived...



# THE \$3.50 PENCIL CHALLENGE

Stacey Steele



Yesterday was a balmy 17 degrees here in Southern Alberta. After three months of shorts, capris and anything cool it was time to scour the closet for a pair of jeans. I admit to a little vain streak when it comes to my jeans, although I don't have what some call a "wrangler butt", I can hold my own in a good pair of Mavi's. But something strange happened, nothing went up past my hips. Ok, something's very wrong here. I tried on the recent "hand-me-ups" my younger long-legged sisters gave to their older short-legged sis. Right on, they're on all the way, now if only I can do up the buttons. Jumping, lying down, and crying couldn't budge any of them. Cursing like a sailor, which would help my old Chevette

start, wouldn't scare the jeans onto me. Even the jeans with a touch of lycra made me look more like Peter Fonda than Bridget Fonda.

Three months ago I quit my labor intensive job at a greenhouse to be with my kids and to go back to school. Since then, so the scale claims, I have put on ten pounds. Ok, more like twelve. Fine, I have gained fifteen pounds and I can guarantee it's not muscle. The "freshmen ten" is a common problem with new students. But what happens when the freshman is not eighteen years old anymore? I know weight loss and healthy living is a result of a well balanced diet and regular exercise. But what diet and what exercise will work for me? After questioning family and friends, and combing the internet and library, I came up with a few diet and exercise options.

## ***The South Beach Diet*** [www.southbeachdiet.com](http://www.southbeachdiet.com)

This diet was developed by cardiologist Dr. Agatston. It claims that you can lose 13 pounds in the first two weeks and "belly fat" goes first (I prefer to call it my "winter storage"). You can lose this weight by not counting calories and portions through three phases (info taken directly from web page).

Phase 1 - Detoxification. Banish your cravings for sweets and starches. You'll lose between 8 and 13 pounds in the first two weeks.

Phase 2 - Reintroduce Carbs. Gradually reintroduce "good" carbs into your diet. You'll lose 1 to 2 pounds a week, until you reach your ideal weight.

Phase 3 - Maintenance Continue eating good carbs and fats, and maintain your weight for the rest of your life.

This diet seems to work on the same premise of another well known diet, Atkins, (discussed below) of high protein and low or no carbs. Sounds interesting, makes sense, but why do I have to sign up to the website at \$34.95 for the first six weeks and \$6.95/ month thereafter? I know the difference between a carbohydrate and protein.

The South Beach Diet makes a lot of claims and I'm sure a lot of people have found success with it, but I like "bad carbs". It seems a little restrictive that one can't eat pasta or bagels for the rest of their life. I also couldn't find a mention of regular exercise on their website. I think I'll pass on this one.

## ***Weight Watchers*** <http://www.weightwatchers.ca>

My favorite out of the multi-billion diet industry. Weight Watchers stresses healthy living and gradual lifestyle changes. No "lose weight fast" claims, and no mention of "belly fat" anywhere on the website. Weight Watchers' weight loss plan involves points. Anything that can go into your mouth and be digested is allotted a certain number of points. An individual is then given a number of points they can eat in one day, based on their



goal weight. So go ahead and eat that Big Mac, chocolate cake or whatever, just don't expect anything else that day.

Weight Watchers claims success because of peer-support meetings (also available online for those who cannot attend in person), complete with weigh ins and motivational speeches. The problem is that to join costs money and then a monthly fee (unless you have a nice friend who will photocopy all the point sheets for you). I personally know several people who have lost substantial amounts of weight with Weight Watchers, and have kept it off, so this diet is more credible for me. Also, they stress cardio and strength exercise as an integral part of healthy living. I like the Weight Watchers plan, but it does seem like a time consuming process figuring out points.

**Atkins** <http://atkins.com>

Cut out sugar and carbs and eat bacon and eggs everyday, three times a day if you want. Yummm, sounds like my kind of plan. Like South Beach (or rather South Beach is like Atkins), this diet plan emphasizes a low or no carb diet. It also introduces phases as a way of eliminating carbs and losing weight. Like Weight Watchers, Atkins uses points, but these points are based on the amount of carbohydrate in a particular food.

The Atkins plan looks good because of their emphasis on overall health and well being rather than strictly weight loss. They have lots of scientific data to back their claims and articles. A good friend of mine has just started Atkins and claims to feel better than she has in months. They also put great importance on the role of exercise. This could be an option, but like the South Beach Diet, I don't think I could stay faithful to it for very long, but the high protein/ low-carb idea seems to be a recurring theme. It's worth a second look.

**Body For Life Challenge** <http://www.bodyforlife.com>

I now have a new favorite in this multi billion dollar industry. Bill Phillips has introduced a weight loss plan in the form of a contest. He started this program by offering his own Lamborghini as a prize in the first challenge. Take a before picture in your underwear or swimsuit, follow his plan for twelve weeks take a picture, send it in and you could win your share of one million dollars. The before and after photos of past winners is inspiring, the nutrition portion seems easy and non-restrictive and the fitness component is easy enough to do at home.

The diet is easy to follow. From Monday to Saturday eat six meals a day each consisting of a carb and a protein (on the "approved" list), and eat as many vegetables as you want. Stay faithful to this and on Sunday eat whatever you want. The fitness component relies on intensity rather than duration. Three times a week do twenty minutes of cardio at varying degrees of intensity. Weight train for the other three times a week.

All of the information (nutrition, training programs etc.) is free on his website, plus you have the opportunity to enter his contest. Sounds great, no ulterior motives here. Wait a minute, what is all this talk about supplements, power bars, shakes and vitamins? And what is EAS? Bill Phillips also apparently owns EAS which is a supplement company. The use of supplements is heavily emphasized in the Body for Life program, so my guess is that this is where the money is made. My suggestion is to go on the website, get all the free information and ignore the supplement ads.

So there it is, four of the most popular diet programs in North America. It is up to each of us to research what will work best in our families lifestyle, but I have a challenge of my own for all you who are not 18 year old freshmen but who have still put on ten or twenty pounds. Here is the **Body For Right Now challenge**:

Step 1- Give away the clothes that don't fit and may never fit.

Step 2- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables, and have that piece of cake.

Step 3- Get outside everyday with your kids, spouse, dog or iguana and run around for a while.

That's it, that's my challenge. Follow it for twelve weeks or eight weeks or however long you want. If you've lost weight, that's fine. If you've had fun with your family and friends and don't care if you're not a size 6 or 12 or whatever anymore, even better. Send in your story and you could be the challenge winner. The prize isn't a foxy \$100,000 Lamborghini, but a really cool mechanical pencil from Staples I got for \$3.50 (that's all I can afford, but it is really cool). Good luck!

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*Stacey Steele is currently finishing her B.A with a major in Psychology/Women's Studies. She won the most improved math award in Grade 8 and \$50 on a scratch and win once. She lives in Southern Alberta with her husband, two children, two mali uromastix lizards, and a family of mule deer that live across the road.*

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## THE VOICE FICTION FEATURE

### Poems by Bill Pollett

#### lemonade

in these dark and troubled times  
I find myself anaesthetized  
by the sweet sting of memories  
that swarm and hum like honey bees

sheet lightning and lemonade  
faces painted like b-movie braves  
frozen ponds and midnight drives  
haunted woods and endless skies  
fireflies in the dead of summer  
running home before the thunder

looking back it all makes sense,  
past seems perfect: present tense



#### another case

he eyes her documents carefully  
mother of three  
any refugee could be a terrorist

types her name on his flickering screen  
radium hieroglyph on electric papyrus  
names he can't pronounce  
worlds he can't understand  
realms of palaces and hunger  
mystics, statistics and bombs

he asks her all the routine questions  
a dispassionate voice  
disembodied face above the desk

she is afraid of him  
the way he reminds her of the soldiers  
framed in the open doorway  
the night they took her father  
routines and smiles fixed like bayonets

he'll do his best for her

just another case, you can't take them all

The Voice buys fiction in all forms and genres. Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more information. Or, you may wish to submit your fiction for the Voice Writing Contest. See this issue for details and submission guidelines.

# FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

## Dog Attack!

*By Debbie Jabbour*



In recent weeks several children have been brutally attacked by dogs in Edmonton. The most recent is a toddler who was initially expected not to survive - but after a week in a coma, has opened his eyes. He has some 600 stitches criss-crossing his tiny head and face, a horrific testimony to what this little boy endured during the attack.

The first incident occurred a little more than a week previous to this, involving an Akita, who attacked a young boy while he was playing with other youngsters on the neighbour's backyard trampoline. Although the boy was traumatized, his injuries were relatively minor and only resulted in a brief hospitalization. This dog had attacked children several times before, but each time was returned to the owners after animal control investigated. After this final attack, publicity and subsequent public outcry led to the owners agreeing to have the dog put down.

The second incident occurred when a young girl going door to door selling chocolates attempted to pet a cuddly-looking Akita and was bitten. Shortly after this attack was reported, the third incident came to light - that of the toddler. This little boy was at a relative's home, playing with their dog, again an Akita. Things appeared fine until the boy attempted to offer the dog some water, at which point the dog suddenly attacked the child, biting through his jaw, tearing into his skull. His terrified older sister observed the attack and managed to call 911. Even though the attack lasted only seconds, the damage was extensive, and the child faces many years of rehabilitation and plastic surgery - in addition to coping with the emotional trauma.

But the physical scars often heal long before the emotional ones. Reading about these attacks brought back a vivid childhood memory. When I was about four or five years old, I lived in a relatively new development on the east side of the city, an area that had previously been my grandparents' farmland. We did not have many neighbours, since most of the area was still vacant lots, and no one had any fences. One neighbour across the street, a few doors down, had a dog. A black, very large, very scary, dog. The first time I encountered this beast, I had ventured outside to play on my front lawn. Suddenly out of nowhere this giant came bounding down the street towards me. I was very small and he was very large and very fast. He flew across the sidewalk, his long legs eating up the distance, barking and leaping, as he aimed directly for me. I ran terrified and screaming towards the security of my house, my heart racing, as I barely made it to safety behind the screen door.

This scene was repeated almost every day that summer. It would be a lovely sunny day, and I would open the door, peering around the corner to see if it was safe to step outside. Sometimes it was. Most of the time it was not. On occasion it would seem safe, and I would get brave enough to make it as far as the sidewalk, maybe start riding my bike, only to suddenly have the dog appear around the corner of his house. It finally got to the point where I was too terrified to even go outside anymore, and I began to spend most of my time playing alone in my room. I had no way of knowing when that dog might be running loose, and I could not take the risk of going outside.

To this day I don't know if the dog was vicious, or if it was just playful. I only knew that the dog was twice my size and I was afraid.

The dog was gone by the following summer, but the trauma never left me. To this day I can see myself running from that animal, and I can remember the terror I felt. I clearly remember wanting to go outside to play, but letting the possibility of the dog's presence prevent me from doing so. I was an excessively shy and quiet child, and I often wonder how much this was exacerbated by the dog encounters.

As I grew older, I never managed to develop any affinity for dogs. I never again had occasion to feel the same terror I had felt as a child, but all the same I had no interest in making friends with a dog either. For a while my brother-in-law raised and bred dogs, and although his dogs were beautiful, well-behaved animals, I was never really comfortable when the dogs were around. One of my daughters demonstrated the same hesitation, leading my brother-in-law to accuse me of passing my "fear of dogs" on to my child. This accusation was proven false when his second son became a toddler and began to exhibit an even greater excessive fear of the dogs - a behaviour certainly not modeled by his father!

Reading about these dog attacks, I cannot help but wonder if maintaining a healthy fear around dogs is perhaps a good thing. I've often read (and seen) about children who are quick to attempt to pet a dog, any dog, making the assumption that they are "pets," all cute and cuddly and friendly. All too often, the dog has responded negatively - not necessarily with a vicious attack, but with snarls, nips and bites. Expert dog breeders warn that children and dogs don't mix, noting that children move differently, and these movements, combined with their small size, can lead dogs to consider them "prey."

Why the apparent increase in number and viciousness of dog attacks? Some believe that dogs are being bred to be more aggressive, to meet the security needs of an ever more fearful populace. Others suggest that too many dog owners are simply careless and lax in training, eager to own a particular breed but not willing to familiarize themselves with the breed's traits. In the above three incidents, Akitas were involved, a breed originally raised as aggressive hunting dogs, but generally considered good, loyal family pets, according to their breeders. Akita owners in Edmonton were quick to defend the breed after the attacks, noting (quite correctly) that although certain breeds of dog are known to be prone to aggressiveness, any dog regardless of breed can become vicious given the right circumstance. Many pet owners are simply too busy to properly care for their dogs, leaving animals tied up to fend for themselves for long periods of time, leading to irritability and unpredictable behaviour.

Of course accidents can still happen. The toddler who was attacked had been playing all afternoon with the dog, and the incident occurred in a familiar environment in the home of relatives. There are, however, ways to minimize these occurrences. A lot of it comes down to responsibility versus irresponsibility. Irresponsible pet owners are those who have a dog that is already known to be capable of vicious attacks, and still allow it uncontrolled around others, as was the case in the first attack. The same is true of careless dog owners who allow their animal to run free around the neighbourhood, as with the dog that terrorized me as a child. Responsible pet owners raise their animals properly and keep them appropriately restrained if they are bred to be vicious guard dogs. People who adopt pets from animal shelters need to also exercise caution, since these animals come from an unknown background and environment, and could be potentially vicious in the right circumstance. Responsible parents teach their children to be cautious around dogs, particularly around unknown animals, and they make sure they supervise small children playing with dogs at all times. Common sense dictates that dogs, no matter how well trained or family-friendly they may be - are still animals. As such, they can be unpredictable. Common sense also dictates that a small child and a large dog should never be left unsupervised together - even a friendly dog with benign intent can cause serious damage to a small child.

The toddler's parents went public with what had happened in the hopes that their story would serve as a warning for others to exercise caution when children are around dogs. Hopefully the responsible reporting of such events will have the desired result - not to sensationalize dog attacks or demonize a particular breed of dog - but to raise public awareness of the need to be responsible dog owners and responsible parents.

# Health Studies: A Journey Through My Past *Jana Thurova*



Like many other students, I intend to complete my studies and earn a degree. To accomplish that I am challenged to choose among many the art courses which represent my major. Because my major requires some science courses as well, I have recently decided to try one of them. Health studies has entered my everyday life and I already know much more about psychological and physical conditions.

As I was going through the chapters - simultaneously I was going through my life.

I am still not too old to do the review of my childhood, youth and maturity. However, what I went through during past 26 years made me think and think again about what's important in my life.

I was planning to be born on my mother's birthday, but I missed the due date. I came almost three weeks later. I didn't even get a chance to see my mom, because I was rushed into the ICU and then to the different hospital due to a condition related to pneumonia which was caused by an excessive amount of fluid in my lungs. Now I know that I was not supposed to drink that. But hey, nobody told me that at the time....

By the time I entered the school yard for the first time, I already had some cuts and bruises, but I was described as a very quiet and shy girl. During the elementary school years, my chart at the doctor's office was becoming fuller and fuller and by the time I graduated from high school, the diversity of my chart could have been compared to that of an old man.

I went through so many sore throats, flues and cold, I had to have my tonsils removed - you wouldn't believe how hard it is for me to swallow a large vitamin pill to this day! Once, after having very bad headaches that didn't allow me to bow my head to the knees, I was sent for additional x-rays. They showed some mass in my head and it had to be removed through my nostrils. I also spent some time in hospital because of my teeth after a doctor pulled my tooth in not very professional way. I guess she was just practicing on me.

I was only eleven at that time and I already blamed God for suffering so much. I had no clue children over the world suffer much more.

By the age of seventeen, in addition to enjoying first dates and receiving first kisses, my appearances at the doctor's office doubled. The cause? Kidney stones. I spent some time in hospital waiting for the stones to leave the canal. Finally laser surgery brought some relief, but still some stones are there.

After having so much illness in my childhood and adolescence, I would never have believed that someone like me could have a family of their own. But, I got pregnant. I still don't know how, but I did. After I realized that it was not a joke, and that I really was pregnant, I did my best for the baby and myself.

The first three months went accordingly to the book I was reading about the pregnancy. After that, I had every symptom mentioned in the book, starting with morning sickness - pardon me, in my case it was all day sickness. I was throwing out everything. Everything from my stomach, shelves and table. I had blood on my toothbrush, spider veins on my legs and, based on the ultrasound, some gallstones as company for my baby.

When the D-day came I was yelling and screaming, pushing and cursing and verbally throwing my husband out of the room. Pushing didn't help. My daughter was born by C-section and so was my son two and a half years later.



Now, I am enjoying my children a lot. They are two smart and beautiful creatures - how did this happen? - and I love them to death.

Just recently, though, I started having pain in my breast and chest, arm and fingers. Of course, I cannot forget the breasts, right? The pain was awful, my bones hurt and I had the urge to cough. My doctor prescribed antibiotics and sent me for blood tests, an x-ray and a CT-scan.

I was so scared I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat. I did excellent research on the Internet, better than any radiology centre. As it turned out, the results were fine. I nearly kissed the doctor when I heard, but instead I kissed my husband and children. The joy and happiness I felt that day hasn't stopped yet.

I realize again and again what's the most important in my life. I may sound like a hypochondriac, but when I feel sick I usually really am.

Here, in America people try to prevent diseases by regular check-ups. Billboards, brochures and commercials teach us about the symptoms of various kinds of cancers, and people try to take precautions.

From my point of view - the more I know, the more scared I am. On the other hand, with so much information I can help not just myself but also people around me. Health Studies has so far been an interesting journey through my past, but I hope that what I learn will help me keep my family safe in the future.



**TO SAVE SPECIES, YOU HAVE TO SAVE FORESTS.**

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# CANADIAN FED WATCH!

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## NEWS ACROSS THE NATION...

*By Karl Low*



### Why Funding Is Important

Sometimes in all the talk about provincial funding of post-secondary education, it becomes difficult to remember exactly why it is so important. Yes, we all know that the universities are having difficulties providing all the services they would like to, and sure we know that students have a hard time affording their courses, but these days that almost seems like it's just the way things are. Universities and students will always want more money, and they'll always complain about how they aren't able to function effectively without it, but they still seem to get the job done, right?

Maybe not. In Nova Scotia, the Department of Education was recently notified that the "Success College for Applied Arts and Technology" filed for bankruptcy protection. Put simply, somewhere the system failed and this college may not be able to continue. While under bankruptcy protection, the courses will continue as normal, but if the school closes, the Department says that "The Private Career Colleges Act provides for protection for students in cases such as this to ensure that the students still get the training."

This works for a normal, campus based institution, especially in a region as small as Nova Scotia, where another campus based university or technical school is probably not that distant. But what would happen if Athabasca University ran into these types of troubles. Will students across the country be similarly protected? Equally important, many Athabasca University students are here because it is really the only way that they can manage to work a university education in to their lives. Would AU students be guaranteed that they could continue their education in this manner?

It's something that those in provincial governments across the country should stop to think about. Remember that even as an Ontario student, what Premier Klein does to post-secondary education can have a large effect on you. Perhaps it's time that we as voters started putting pressure on our own provincial governments to take an interest in Athabasca University.

### Manitoba Helps Students Get Work

Manitoba is announcing funding to help post-secondary students find part-time jobs over the course of the school year. Employers will be able to receive as much as \$3.40 per hour to offset the costs of hiring a post-secondary student as a part-time employee. Students can also gain bursaries of \$500 or \$1000 to be applied to tuition or student loans by performing 100 or 200 hours of community service.

The difference with this program as opposed to many of the other student employment programs is that this one is actually useful to students during the school year, as opposed to just in the summer. Usually I feel that while incentives such as these are good, better incentives might be to apply the money to lower tuition for all students. There certainly is no shame in working while going to university, but it does not make things any easier, either. This case is slightly different however, because the Manitoba government is only providing \$200,000 for this program. Such a small amount would provide a minimal benefit to university students, while the community service amounts work well to benefit not only the student, but the community as well.

It's always nice to see win-win situation occur.  
It's just a shame they're so rare.

## British Columbia Looks After Its Own

The provincial government of British Columbia is announcing an increase of three million dollars to their Youth Educational Assistance Fund. This fund has been set up so that students who grew up in government care have a chance to access post-secondary education. It only makes sense that when the government expects entire families to help out with funding their child's education, those children for whom the government serves as parents should have some support.

Perhaps more important, however, is that by giving the opportunity for these students to attend post-secondary education, the British Columbia government is actually working to breaking a cycle of poverty that often starts if a person lacks a family to help support them. Children and Family Development Minister Gordon Hogg has said, "In today's knowledge-based society, parents have an obligation to make sure their children have a good education. Government is the legal parent for about 700 youth who reach the age of majority each year. We are committed to increasing access to post-secondary education and providing the skilled professionals that our province needs."

The strange part about this program, however, is that it occurs in the province that saw a rise of 30% in their tuitions this year. Last year, a student would have to pay, on average, about \$3,100 for a year of undergraduate tuition. This year, a student will have to pay approximately \$4,100 (as shown in the Statistics Canada survey I commented on last week). The maximum amount of the grant, on the other hand, is only \$3,500.

Perhaps Minister Hogg doesn't understand what the words "increasing access" really mean.

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*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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## WAYNE BENEDICT: THE HARRIED STUDENT

*Wayne E. Benedict*



Three weeks ago I wrote an article about my departure from the railway industry entitled "Working for the Railway" (The Voice, v11 i35). It ended with the statement that: "I hereby declare myself to be a fulltime Athabasca University student." This week I am forced to recant my statement and once again declare myself to be a part-time AU student. My wife and I had sold our house and were in the midst of packing to move into a rental property in Prince George so that we could afford to live on her wages alone while I studied. Our plans changed suddenly on August 22, 2003 when I received a phone call that would radically

change our family's lives forever.

Last fall, when I was consulting with a lawyer that I had hired for advice regarding a labour arbitration award, he asked who had written the Union submission. When I told him that I had, he told me that he thought it was "very sophisticated." I was understandably honoured and thanked him very much. Then he asked me if I had ever thought about law school. I laughed and said no and that I didn't even have an undergraduate degree, which was a prerequisite for law school. "Besides" I said, "I'm too old for that now." He told me that mature students could sometimes get into law school without an undergraduate degree and that I should think about it. Some weeks later, we again talked about law school in his office and I began to seriously think it over.

I went onto the Internet and began to research the possibility that I might actually be able to become a lawyer and while I never really thought it to be a realistic option at this point in my life, I found that mature students without undergraduate degrees could indeed be accepted into law school. Schools take into account both Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores and GPAs of prospective students; and mature applicants must also provide two letters of recommendation in support of their selection, and compete against other discretionary applicants. I quickly prepared three applications and sent them off to UBC, UVic and the University of Saskatchewan. I wrote my LSAT on February 8, 2003 at the University of Northern BC and had my AU transcripts sent to each university.

I didn't really expect to get into law this year but I thought it would be an interesting experience to go through the application procedure and I planned on reapplying next year after completing my degree at AU. Early in the summer I received a letter from UVic thanking me for my application but stating that I was not accepted. I was neither surprised nor disappointed. A few weeks later UBC sent me a similar letter. Finally the response came from the University of Saskatchewan. It stated that I was neither accepted, nor rejected, but that I had been placed on a deferred list of applicants that would be referred to if seats opened up. It asked whether I would like to remain on the list and stated that notification of acceptance, if it ever came, might be as late as the first week of classes. I responded that I would like to remain on the list and then went on with my life, laying my plans for fulltime studies through AU.

At 14:00, August 22, 2003 I was sitting at my office desk making arrangements for our family move when the phone rang. It was a member of the U of Saskatchewan College of Law selection committee offering me a seat in the College. I practically fell off my chair. She said: "You don't have to decide right now." My response was "Yes, yes, yes."

From that moment on life has been a marathon of exhaustion. I phoned my wife Linda at her work and told her the news. She told me later that she began to shake and could hardly hold the phone. She gave her notice that day. On Monday, August 25, 2003 my friends and I, along with some hired help, loaded most of our belongings into a 5 ton truck and rental trailer. My good friend Dave Veniot (now the president of CAW Local 110), my father (driving his truck and pulling the trailer), and I set out that afternoon for Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. After hauling furniture for 9 hours, we drove well into the night and finally stopped at Hinton Alberta for a 6 hour sleep. While we were driving, Linda was researching the Internet and phoning Saskatoon to try to arrange a rental property there in which our family could take up residence. We were in communication via my cellular phone as I crossed BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. She found a place for us sight-unseen. On Tuesday we drove the rest of the way and unloaded until midnight. On Wednesday we unloaded the rest of the stuff and I made a thousand phone calls to arrange utility services. At 15:30 we set out for BC and drove until midnight, stopping over in Edson AB. Thursday morning we set out at 07:00 and arrived that evening in Prince George.

Incredibly, Linda continued to work her job Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. All day Friday, the kids and I ran around Prince George tying-up loose ends. That afternoon, I was back into loading our goods into the trailer, Dad's truck, Linda's van and my VW Golf. At midnight everything was finally loaded (except for those things that wouldn't fit or were forgotten). Saturday at 08:00 our convoy set out for Saskatchewan—the second time in a week for Dad and me. We drove for nearly ten hours and stayed over at Vegreville AB. I am writing this article on my laptop computer in a Motel room in that town. It is Sunday morning and we will be leaving right after breakfast on the remaining leg of our journey.

By the time you are reading this article I will already have begun my classes—my first day is September 2, 2003. I have only today and tomorrow to get to Saskatoon, unload our things, and prepare for law school. Linda has to obtain work and our children must be registered in a new French Immersion school (which we will have to find). The only time in my life that I can recall being as mentally, emotionally, and physically tired was

when I fought forest fires for six weeks straight without a day off in 1986. Even so, I would crawl naked over broken glass for this opportunity, so these trials are but a bump in the road.

To correct my statement from the previous article: I hereby declare myself to be a fulltime student of the University of Saskatchewan College of Law and a part-time student of Athabasca University.

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*Wayne E. Benedict has a varied career history and strong links to the Canadian labour movement. He is working toward his Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations at Athabasca University. For a more detailed writer bio, see The Voice writers' feature page, at: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/authors/authorfull.php?ID=7>. If you would like to send article-feedback to Wayne, he can be reached at [wayneben@telus.net](mailto:wayneben@telus.net).*

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Dear Sandra,

I've been job hunting for a part-time job to pay for my courses and I wonder if you could tell me what companies are looking for when they say they require "basic" computer skills? I can type and surf the net, is that what they mean?

Perplexed in Calgary

Dear Perplexed,

I think the requirements vary from job to job, some places may consider your current skills top notch while others think your skills are way below standard. I asked a friend of mine who does a lot of hiring for office staff to define this vague "basic" qualification.

Primarily, if employers are asking for basic computer skills as a qualification they want you to be able to turn the computer on and off (without breaking a sweat worrying if you did it wrong), open and close programs (same no sweat thing), and use a mouse and keyboard (preferably not using the hunt and peck method). It also helps to have file management skills (creating, saving and deleting files on floppy or CD-ROM, possibly even knowing all about zipping and unzipping large files), system maintenance knowledge (being able to perform back-ups, defragmenting and disk clean-ups, virus checking, etc...) word processing and other office tasks (this is the big one, you should know your way around a word processing program and possibly spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations) and finally, they may also want you to have internet skills (sending and replying to email, opening and sending attachments and using netiquette – believe me it is VERY easy for people to misconstrue your tone and meaning in an email ☺).

That's what I think of too, when I think "basic" computer skills. For the record, I have "basic" computer skills. I know how to defragment, I just don't know, or really even care, why I have to perform this mundane and time-consuming task. I realize by admitting this fact that I have lost the respect from many of the computer geeks and goddesses of the AU world, but maybe I've gained their pity (fingers crossed).

*Sandra*

**I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! TELL ME YOUR TROUBLES. YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.**

*This column is for entertainment only. Sandra is not a professional counsellor, but is an AU student who would like to give personal advice about school and life to her peers. Please forward your questions to Sandra care of [smoore@ausu.org](mailto:smoore@ausu.org)*





## Cosmos: War of the Planets Film Review

By Laura Seymour



Oh dear what did I stumble onto? In case you are wondering this isn't the film with sex kitten Mamie Van Doren—that film came out in 1980. This is a dreadful 1978 film made by Italian film director Alfonso Brescia (aka Al Bradly).

It stars a lot of people you've never heard of and don't want to.

You see there was this DVD sale at Zellers with an alien theme ... oh never mind. I popped this side of the two DVD set in and choked from the very beginning. Oh horrors what I have to say isn't sweet. But you know how you can watch films just for how awful they are? BINGO.

Well... the start of this is on a space ship and there's "a fight." Well, ok, let's be clear – a skinny guy I could blow down in the middle of an asthma attack walks up to another cast member and socks him. So this establishes that Captain somebodyorother is a loose cannon and has a habit of ignoring authority...or so says the brass in a meeting regarding the incident. Oh boy... this loose

cannon promptly does whatever the brass down on Earth decides! Sheesh!

The plot is something along these lines... A strange signal is received. They track it down and investigate the planet it originates from. The plot does a quick pitch into nowhere now. The crew goes through a knock off of Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Indians*. Slowly... well quickly really, they disappear until a few remain. We manage to get a look at a very bad death scene from one of the "actors" and a hand of something that I take it is supposed to belong to the giant robot (gotta be a giant robot—right?!). When the crewmembers realize their shipmates have disappeared, one man remarks, "It's all the work of a fiend!" This then leads in to a Phantom of the Opera organ solo – no kidding! They do some investigating and decide the planet has a quartz crystal that sends messages *only* to Earth! STOP! I can't take the illogic any more! My brain will burst!

Eventually they meet the much-misunderstood leader of the planet. He announces that everyone except him has been turned into mental mush. The crew agree to help these poor creatures and one of the mental mushies comes aboard as their newest member. Conveniently, though, the member has the ability to save the ship at the end – so what happened to the mental mush?!!

Throughout we have a useless plot. Something gets established and then gets contradicted with the next "poor-formance". The reactions and line delivery are awful. I've seen worse mind you. There were no microphones dangling into the shot... no rotating night shot/ day shot for one lonely road and two separate angles.

Lights. Oh my. Someone had fun putting every possible light they could squeak out of their budget on a blinker! That's important in spaceships isn't it?

Dialogue has been changed and dubbed depending on the actor. The lips don't match the sound SOOOOOO often.

In the scenery department we have a problem. There is a space walk near the beginning and the background is an obvious picture of a space module of some kind.

Direction suffers dreadfully. There is a highly inappropriate moment between a man and woman on the bridge when they indicate their interest in one another while a man is in agony outside the window! Crappy, crappy timing Alfonso!

Get this... you've heard of a "computer whiz"? Someone in Italy did too, as the computer is named WIZ. The computer has a labored male voice and an attitude. Oh dear. Everyone KNOWS a computer is female! The ummmm computer interrupts our only real romantic moment to give a ludicrous announcement that "radar shows two shining points" heading their way! Huh? The shining points are spacecraft and they're under attack.

This leads to a major writing comment. Every single problem is considered "impossible" to get out of. Nothing but nothing is a little tough, difficult or some hard work. They say we're lost the minute a problem arrives! Glad I'm not a member of this team... they'd have me reaching for a straight razor!

The Cosmic Love machine is a supposed sexy touch to the film. It does nothing but get in the way, makes little to no sense and is handled klutzily by the actors. No nudity, no hot kisses, no good performances... sigh. Whatta waste of film!

Sound... oh yes. There is sound. Except a real band would be tough so they hired someone to go up and down an electronic keyboard to sound "spacey". It doesn't work. Also apparently when you show an outside shot of the spacecraft it's important to hear voices singing some part of an indistinguishable song! And the "thunder" inside the cave where people disappear is so bad I could do better with a Cuisinart on "chop".

This film makes the *Flesh Gordon* series look like Academy Award winning films! Give it a miss or be prepared to use it as a sleeping pill.

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*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).*

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## 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**

# ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### JOB POSTING



The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU), is seeking a creative and self-motivated individual to fill the position of Executive Director. AUSU is a non-traditional students' organization representing approximately 26,000 distance education students from across Canada and internationally. The AUSU office is based in downtown Edmonton, and under the guidance of a nine-member elected Council, provides services at a distance to Athabasca University students including: advocacy, representation, communication, student clubs, and scholarships & bursaries.

Under the direction of the AUSU president, and working closely with the executive committee; the Executive Director will provide support to the AUSU Council team in achieving our vision. Working within established policies and guidelines, the Executive Director will oversee AUSU activities through liaison between staff, students, the university and AUSU Council. While primarily responsible for overall administration and management of the AUSU office and its services, the position encompasses a wide variety of duties, including (but not limited to): research, basic website maintenance, bookkeeping, external representation, preparation of reports and news releases, records maintenance, and policy development. The successful candidate will possess multiple and diverse skills, and will be willing to grow and develop this new position to best meet the needs and goals of our unique student organization.

The position will be of interest to highly motivated, enthusiastic individuals who are seeking a unique employment opportunity that will allow personal growth and skill development in all aspects of organizational management within a dynamic student service environment.

Executive Director position requirements include:

- An undergraduate degree in administration, arts, finance, or the equivalent.
- Excellent organizational, presentation, interpersonal, problem solving, and team building skills
- Basic accounting skills in a computerized environment
- Ability to understand and interpret legislation and policy
- Competency in research and Internet search tools
- Adaptable and flexible; an independent self-starter who is ready to learn and meet new challenges.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Accuracy and attention to detail
- Experience in providing leadership and coordination in a team environment
- Awareness of post secondary education issues
- Computer aptitude and proficiency in Windows, MS Office, and Internet-based computer environments.

Previous experience in board management in a post secondary educational environment or non-profit organization would be an asset. The position requires flexible work hours.

Starting salary is \$30,000 plus a benefit package.

Preference will be given to an Athabasca University student or alumnus.  
Athabasca University Students' Union is an equal opportunity employer.

For further information regarding this position, contact Debbie Jabbour, President, at 780-497-3413 or email [president@ausu.org](mailto:president@ausu.org)

Competition closes September 23, 2003. Letters of application, accompanied by resume and three references should be sent by mail, courier, or email to:

Debbie Jabbour, President  
Athabasca University Students' Union  
2<sup>nd</sup> Flr, North Tower  
10030 – 107 Street  
Edmonton AB T5J 3E4

Email as .doc attachments to [president@ausu.org](mailto:president@ausu.org).

# SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

For scholarships available through the Athabasca University Students' Union, see the AUSU website at [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org)



## Athabasca University Awards and Scholarship Information

The Office of the Registrar would like to advise students of pending deadlines for scholarships and awards:

**Award Name:** Alberta Blue Cross 50th Anniversary Scholarship

**Value:** \$375

**Program:** Bachelor of Nursing

**Basic Criteria:** Highest GPA in last two courses

**Application Deadline:** September 30

**Award Name:** Persons Case Scholarship

**Value:** \$1,000 to \$5,000

**Program:** All programs are eligible

**Basic Criteria:** Female; Full-time; Resident of Alberta

**Application Deadline:** September 30

**Award Name:** Bursary Program for Indigenous Students

**Value:** \$Varies

**Program:** School of Business programs

**Basic Criteria:** Students of Indigenous Heritage

**Application Deadline:** On-going, contact Paulette Windsor at 1-800-788-9042, ext. 6149

For more information on the specific criteria for these awards, please visit the AU website at:

<http://www.athabascau.ca/html/depts/registry/studawrd.htm>

Applications for these awards can be obtained by calling the Office of the Registrar at 1-780-675-6705 or by email at [awardsinfo@athabascau.ca](mailto:awardsinfo@athabascau.ca).

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## TERRY FOX HUMANITARIAN AWARD

**Value:** \$6000; \$3000

**DEADLINE: February 1, 2004**

**Administrator:** Terry Fox Humanitarian Award Program

Notes: Award recipients must meet the following criteria: Involvement in voluntary humanitarian work; Canadian citizens or landed immigrants; Undergraduates studying towards their first university degree or diploma at a Canadian post-secondary institution in Canada; and Maintain a satisfactory academic standing and continued involvement in voluntary humanitarian and community work.

**Contact Information:**

8888 University Drive, AQ 5003  
Burnaby BC V5A 1S6

Web Site: <http://www.terryfox.org>

E-mail: [terryfox@sfu.ca](mailto:terryfox@sfu.ca)

Tel: 604-291-3057

Fax: 604-291-3311



# CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

## Contributed By AU's *The Insider*

- **AU Learning Services Conference** - October 3 & 4, 2003 - Edmonton, Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe. Details to follow.



## OTHER CONFERENCES

- **CAPDHHE [Canadian Association for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment in Higher Education]** - To be held in Calgary, October 29 - November 1, 2003. <http://www.capdhhe.org/conference2/index.htm>
- **Teaching In A Digital Age** - the impact of new communication technologies on teaching and pedagogy. l'Université de Montréal. <http://profetic.org:16080/coll2003/> [French only]
- **China Conference 2003** - Edinburgh July 2003. China Conference Info welcomes people from the commercial and educational sector involved in E-Learning, Distance Learning, Training, HR, IT Training, Localisation, ICT or Knowledge Management, to this world first international event. China represents the biggest target market for these sectors ever and is still largely untapped.

Entering the Chinese market place is a complex move. This conference provides a forum on exchange of market information not only on product and service requirements, but on specialist market entrance requirements. If you are working in any of these sectors you should seriously consider entering this event in your diary. The conference will be patronised by professionals from, China, the USA, Europe and Australia and represents the largest collective gathering of these specialists centred around the Chinese market ever!

For more information:

<http://www.chinaconferenceinfo.com>

## Summer Symposium on Health Ethics

Wednesday 6 August 2003

The John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre (JDHEC) invites you to attend a one-day symposium on health ethics. This course will offer a series of presentations by JDHEC Faculty that will challenge you to examine and explore the essential place of ethics in health care practice.

### For more information:

Website [www.ualberta.ca/bioethics](http://www.ualberta.ca/bioethics)

Email [Dossetor.Centre@ualberta.ca](mailto:Dossetor.Centre@ualberta.ca)

Phone 780-492-6676

**Know of an educational conference that is not on this list? Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) with the details and we'll list it in Conference Connections.**

*Does the pressure of having to  
study alone keep you up at night?*

**AUSU STUDY BUDDY**



## **CLASSIFIEDS:**

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**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](mailto: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**

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c/o Athabasca University Students' Union  
2nd Floor, 10030-107th Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4  
800.788.9041 ext. 3413

**Editor In Chief** Tamra Ross Low

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***THE VOICE ONLINE: [WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE](http://WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE)***

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