

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

*Volume 15 Issue 21
June 8, 2007*



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THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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Lessons Learned

In early May, a group of sixth-graders set out for an adventure with their teachers—a weeklong trip to a state park in their home state of Tennessee. Like it would be for any group of young kids, the trip was probably high adventure, perhaps the first time that some of them had been away from home. The students' school, Scales Elementary, is part of the Murfreesboro city school system, and according to education officials the campers had been told that their trip would include a "campfire

prank"¹ by their teachers.

As it turned out, the teachers' idea of a prank was to tell the students that a gunman was prowling the area. Lights were turned off, students were ordered to hide under tables, and one of the adults disguised herself with a hood and rattled the doorknobs, presumably to pretend she was the gunman and heighten students' fear. The so-called prank was staged less than one month after the Virginia Tech shootings.

According to one student, "A teacher told us, 'We just got a call that there's been a random shooting.'"²

This incredible lapse in common sense is bad enough, but perhaps the most disturbing thing is some of the reactions to it. Some people are, understandably, upset. But others, namely school administrators, are backpedalling, trying to downplay the incident and claiming that it provided a learning experience for students in the event of a real emergency. (If memory serves, one of the points to an emergency drill is that participants are rational and aware enough to learn from it because they *know* it's a drill.)

One parent, referring to the teacher and assistant principal who orchestrated the events (and were suspended), is "sorry that two good people are being punished for a very tragic mistake."³

Unfortunately, those attitudes miss the point of what could be a *real* lesson learned here: that weapons are not toys, that threats are not a prank, and that the violence so casually displayed in today's news and entertainment has a much greater significance than harmless amusement.

Too many times, we hear of children bringing weapons to school as a way to impress their peers; of students finding it funny to call in bomb scares. A recent example of the casual acceptance of violence and weapons resulted in the death of a 15-year-old boy. At a Toronto-area high school, three young men were seen "playing" with a loaded handgun outside the school. From preliminary findings, it appears that the three were friends and the weapon was accidentally fired—but the bullet that hit a 15-year-old's chest was still real, and he is still dead.

In the case of the thoughtless prank played in Tennessee, the real tragedy is not that a teacher and assistant principal made a mistake and are paying the (admittedly light) consequences for it. The tragedy is that the attitudes of the parents and teachers who defend those actions are teaching children that violence, or the threat of violence, is the stuff of entertainment, of harmless fun. The rest of us can only hope that's one lesson their children don't learn.

¹ The Tennessean, 2007. "School system says students told to expect prank." Retrieved June 5, 2007, from <http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070514/NEWS04/705140348/1018>

² New York Times, 2007. "2 Suspended for School Prank That Scared Pupils in Tennessee." Retrieved June 5, 2007, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/15/us/15scare.html?ex=1181188800&en=833111555de20784&ei=5070>

³ The Fairview Observer, 2007. "Two suspended in field trip prank." Retrieved June 5, 2007, from <http://www.fairviewobserver.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070515/NEWS04/705150365/1321/MTCN06>



Face to Facebook

Over the past couple of years, Facebook and MySpace have cornered the social networking market. Millions of people flock to both services to meet others, to keep track of friends, to share interests, and, yes, even to do a little unsavoury spying on others. Despite the popularity of both sites, it may be that Facebook will very soon outstrip MySpace in personal networking, and cause a lot of smaller services to either join a possible Facebook revolution or to close down entirely.

While both Facebook and MySpace provide unique services, Facebook has several advantages not met by the MySpace community, and surpasses MySpace in several key areas. The most notable difference, right up front, is the basic user interface. Facebook is clean, easy to navigate, and fairly ad-free. The only advertising I've come across so far is a few text-based advertisements placed within a person's update page. They are unobtrusive and contain nothing that slows down the web-surfing experience.

Recently Facebook implemented the one thing that could eventually see the demise of other Personal Information Management (PIM), social networking, and blogging sites; the new feature is the Facebook Platform. The Facebook Platform allows anyone to build an application that can be implemented by Facebook and inserted into a user's profile page. Now, not only do users have access to Notes, The Wall, Posted Items, Import Blog, Groups, and Networks, they have a choice between hundreds of other applications (new ones being added daily) that allow users to integrate with other sites and do an almost mind-boggling array of things like import videos and other media; keep track of RSS feeds; share the music they're currently listening to; provide a space where people can download files you provide them; add voice posts; provide links to other social network and PIM sites that the user may use; play a wide range of games; augment the already-provided Facebook basic services; and a lot more.

The Facebook Platform and several of its programs are still in their infancy, so there are still a lot of kinks in some of the systems, but so far the response from users has been very favourable. Feedback from users has also been impressive, providing useful notes and hints for the application creators, rather than merely bitching that something might not be working right. The application creators themselves, along with the Facebook staff, seem very willing to work out bugs and take suggestions from the denizens of Facebook. The best thing about these new services, along with the Facebook basics, is that they are simple to add or remove, and just as easy to customize.

Facebook can take the place of a PIM, a journal, a blog, an address book, a photo album, and just about any other personal online service you might want. It remains free and easily accessible, for the most part, but still presents a problem for AU students who are not provided an email address with which they might join the network provided for AU students. All is not lost, however. While it is an annoyance that we cannot yet join an AU network, there is an AU group (community) to join, where you can hopefully find the AU-related socialization you're looking for.

So far I have not had anything to complain about regarding the service, and do have things to cheer about. I have found cousins I've not spoken with in many years, and found long-lost friends from my misspent youth. If you want another social networking option, or want to look people up, I'd suggest signing up for a

Facebook account. Remember, despite the negative experiences and impressions that others might have of a social networking system, it can be what you make it, and doesn't have to remain only what others make of it.

Other social networking and personal information sharing services you might wish to check out are:

last.fm - <http://www.last.fm>

Allow others to see what music you're listening to on your computer, search for new sounds, and share your musical tastes with others via groups dedicated to whatever musical interest you might have.

del.icio.us - <http://del.icio.us>

A public storehouse for your Internet bookmarks and links. Fabulous for use as a storage place, and also as a links blog.

LiveJournal - <http://www.livejournal.com>

Online journaling and communities based around mutual interest.

LinkedIn - <http://www.linkedin.com>

A network of professionals that allows you to see and share work histories with others, make professional contacts, and perhaps be found for your dream job.

Twitter - <http://www.twitter.com>

Keep abreast of the moment-to-moment activities of your friends.

flickr - <http://www.flickr.com>

Share your photographs, and other image-related work, with others, and see a world of stunning imagery.

The *Voice* Great Canadian Place Challenge

Are you a snow-loving Rocky Mountain gal?

A wide-open-spaces Prairie kind of guy?

Or maybe someone who can't get enough of the rugged coasts and fresh Atlantic air in the east?

Tell us why the place you live is the best place in Canada, in *The Voice* Great Canadian Place Challenge!

Is it the people? The places? The natural Canadian beauty?

Convince us (and *Voice* readers) that Anzac, Alberta is the must-see place for a vacation this summer, or that there's nothing like watching a sunrise in Wrigley, Northwest Territories.

Selected submissions will be paid at regular *Voice* rates, and the winner will also receive a prize pack of *Voice* goodies.



There are two ways to brag about why you're living in the best-kept secret in the country:

1. Send us a 400 - 500 word article explaining what makes your city or town special, or
2. Submit 6 - 8 photos in electronic format (e.g., JPEG, GIF) with a short caption for each one.

Submissions selected for publication will appear in *The Voice* throughout the summer, and the winner will be selected by *Voice* staff on September 30, 2007. Send submissions to voice@ausu.org

All entrants agree to have their names and submissions published in *The Voice*. All articles must be original, unpublished works, and will be edited for spelling, grammar, and clarity. Photos must be original and unpublished, and must be good quality electronic format.

Send us your photos and articles today, and you might just win the bragging rights to the best place in Canada!





NATURE NOTES:

from the backyard to the biosphere

By Zoe Dalton

What's In a Name, What's In a Place?

Management at Toronto's Leslie Street Spit: Restoration or a Distant Relative?

I recently had the chance to visit two sites in Toronto where ecological restoration work is being carried out—High Park's black oak savannah and the Leslie Street Spit. The environmental management approaches at these sites are quite different, and provide an interesting opportunity for exploring a central question in the field of restoration ecology, namely: what activities warrant the title of ecological restoration? A variety of motivations currently form the basis for carrying out restoration efforts, from attempting to restore a site to an approximation of its original, historical condition to centring restoration instead on specific conservation priorities (e.g., recovery of species of concern).

The management strategies in High Park and the Leslie Street Spit provide good examples of these two quite different bases for restoration. In High Park, the primary goals of restoration centre on protecting the existing at-risk black oak savannah ecosystem and restoring this ecosystem to its historical condition as much as possible in the highly-urbanized setting in which the site exists (pretty much downtown Toronto).

The basis for this restoration effort, then, is history: attempts are being made to re-establish plants and plant communities that historically existed at the site, and to reinstate natural (i.e., historical) disturbance regimes such as fire, which are crucial in maintaining appropriate plant community dynamics. Management at High Park can be thought of as an example of classic restoration, in which the site itself provides the historical basis upon which management plans are based.

Management activities at the Leslie Street Spit (a man-made landform extending about 5 km from Toronto's Lake Ontario shoreline) are based on quite a different approach. Restoration at this site is centred on the recovery of target species, especially wildlife species of concern. Without any long-term natural history to call its own, the Leslie Street Spit itself provides no historical basis upon which to develop restoration plans and targets; as such, its management raises two interesting questions:

- 1) Can the creation of ecosystems that did not previously exist at a particular site truly be called restoration?
- 2) Does geography, and scale in particular, matter in the definition of restoration, and does it help to qualify question 1?

Definitions may help to answer these questions. According to the Society for Ecological Restoration International, "Ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or

destroyed.”¹ In the case of the Leslie Street Spit, the actual medium on which restoration is based (a mass of construction waste and imported subsoil) has no history of having been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. As such, it could be said that management programs here are not technically assisting in the site’s recovery: one cannot recover what did not previously exist. In this sense, it may seem more appropriate to term current management activities at the Spit as ecosystem creation or ecological engineering rather than ecological restoration.

Addressing the second question above—that of the importance of geography and scale in restoration—may help resolve the issue of whether or not activities at the Leslie Street Spit can fairly be termed restoration. While the precise geographical location of the landform that is now the Leslie Street Spit was historically an aquatic ecosystem (part of Lake Ontario), nearby sites likely hosted (and still host) plant and animal communities very similar to what is being created in the management units on the Spit. In quibbling over the appropriate use of the term restoration, the question here becomes: what is meant geographically by the terms “site” and “ecosystem”? To make a case that management activities at the Spit should be considered “restoration”, it could be said that current efforts at this particular site are based on restoring characteristics of the broader ecosystem in which the Spit is found. The Leslie Street Spit therefore offers an interesting case in which determining whether or not the term restoration is appropriate is influenced by the geographic scale at which one chooses to define site and ecosystem, and thereby restoration and recovery.

The above discussion highlights some of the complexities involved in the language of a field as necessarily diverse and adaptive as ecological restoration. High Park and the Leslie Street Spit provide interesting cases for exploring the terminology and communication bases of ecological restoration. The remaining question, given the exciting—and in the case of the Leslie Street Spit, dramatic—conservation gains achieved by both projects within an otherwise rapidly-degrading regional ecosystem, is the following: what has greater merit—spending one’s time critiquing the linguistic basis of restoration, or getting one’s hands dirty putting together appropriate habitat at any site where the opportunity arises, regardless of the name given to the activity?

¹ Society for Ecological Restoration International, 2004. “The SER International Primer on Ecological Restoration.” Retrieved June 2, 2007, from http://www.ser.org/content/ecological_restoration_primer.asp



ENVS 243 - Environmental Change in a Global Context

Take an early bird peek at one of AU's new courses, Environmental Change in A Global Context (ENVS 243)! This course, which is also cross-listed as GLST 243, is tentatively scheduled to officially open to student registration within the next few weeks. Through an exciting blend of written and online media, ENVS 243 enables students to explore the myriad ways in which humans and their environment connect, and the effects of these interactions.

Unit 1 of ENVS 243 focuses on the currently debated topic of global climate change. Students explore the meaning of the words "global ecosystem," and are introduced to basic concepts related to current sustainability issues, ecological conservation, and restoration.

Units 2 and 3 focus on the atmosphere, including the ozone layer, surrounding our planet. Students learn about the atmospheric effects of the carbon and nitrogen cycles, and the effects of pollutants on the ozone layer. In addition, oceanic influences, including currents and temperature moderation, are discussed in relation to their direct and indirect effects on the atmosphere.

In unit 4, the main focus is greenhouse gases and their effects on global climate change. Through the course materials and readings, students learn about effects of a warming Arctic, and other environmental effects related to global warming. The Kyoto protocol is also discussed.

ENVS 243's unit 5 focuses on biodiversity loss as a result of human interactions with the environment. Students have the opportunity to learn about the biodiversity index, and also hot spots of alarming decreases in species diversity. Students also explore issues related to species extinction and the implications of extinction.

During units 6 and 7, students are introduced to concepts related to energy and agriculture, and their effects on both the climate and the environment at large. This includes learning about the negative environmental effects of the petroleum industry, as well as discussing positive renewable energy options, including wind and solar power. Agricultural ecosystem topics include the effects of erosion and desertification, as well as current ideas in agriculture, such as permaculture. As well, students are introduced to the genetic engineering debate, with specific focus on its environmental impacts both for this generation and the next.

Unit 8 discusses the important topic of respect for ecological limits. Students are introduced to the concept of the ecological footprint and to natural capitalism solutions.

ENVS 243's final topic focuses on an important environmental issue: sustainable development. Students explore why sustainable development is so important for the future health of our planet. Sustainable development guides, such as those from the Brundtland commission, are also discussed.

In addition to the student and study manuals for the course, ENVS 243 also has an exciting online component using its course home page. Students have access to a wide variety of internet links and other resources related to the different topics and sections discussed in each unit. These resources include articles from the EPA, WWF, and Environment Canada. Not only can these resources further a student's learning experience in

environmental science, but the ideas in these resources can help students decide on essay or assignment topics.

Environmental Science course coordinator Dr. Lorelei Hanson also tutors ENVS 252 (The Environment: Issues and Options for Action) and ENVS 435 (Case Studies in Environmental Protection). Her research interests include "environmental history and the sociology of agriculture; land trusts; rural land management and conservation in Canada."¹ In addition, she has research focus on topics dealing with sustainability in the rural environment, and the various ecological relationships seen in such an environment.

Student evaluation in ENVS 243 consists of four assignments. Three of these assignments are tutor-marked exercises, worth 15%, 15%, and 20% respectively. The fourth assignment consists of a major essay, written on a self-chosen topic that is related to the material covered in the course. The essay has two components: first, a proposal outlining the student's chosen topic and methods of approaching this topic in an essay format; and, finally, the essay component itself. The proposal is sent to the tutor for comments or suggestions prior to the writing of the essay, and it is marked on a pass/fail basis. The essay itself is worth 30% of the ENVS 243 course mark. The remaining 20% of the course evaluation is through a cumulative final exam.

For more information, visit the course syllabus at www.athabasca.ca/html/syllabi/envs/envs243.htm

¹ Athabasca University Centre for Global and Social Analysis. "Environmental Studies Coordinators and Tutors." <http://envs.athabasca.ca/faculty.htm>

Click On This - Backtrack

Lonita Fraser

We are all a sum of what's gone before, from the frightening to the fantastical.

The History of the Guillotine - <http://www.metaphor.dk/guillotine/Pages/History.html>

A rather terrifying piece of machinery, but probably a lot less painful than the garrotte . . . one hopes.

Eleven Weirdest Ancient Mysteries - <http://crazylinkz.blogspot.com/2006/08/11-weirdest-ancient-mysteries.html>

True or false, fake or real—still part of our heritage, still things that fascinate us.

Antique Music Machines of Yesteryear - <http://www.bandorganmusic.com/machines/>

The charming things that made merry-go-rounds and circuses so musically memorable.

Kidipede - History for Kids - <http://www.historyforkids.org/>

I don't care what the label says; I find it hugely interesting and entertaining!

Uchronia - The Alternate History List - <http://www.uchronia.net/>

From the real to the imagined, this is "an annotated bibliography of over 2,800 novels, stories, essays and other printed material involving the 'what ifs' of history. The genre has a variety of names, but it's best known as alternate history."

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis





This City

I remember this city when it was something new and strange to me. That was when the air was filled with the stench of dragons, and every windstorm was the ferocious beat of their mighty wings. Those were my bohemian days, living in the one-room apartment on the edge of Chinatown. There were rumours of underground opium dens and the footfalls of murderers passing by in the middle of the night. I would leave my window open on hot summer evenings while I listened to the radio. There was always the smell of piss and barbecued duck and rotten vegetables filling the heavy air.

I remember this city when it felt something like my own. I was running alone on the beach after midnight in second-hand sneakers from the Sally Ann. I was freer than the modern world generally allows. The moon was a great paper lantern leaking sparks onto the lush tarry blackness of waves.

Then one day everything changed. I was sitting in a café, drinking greasy-tasting Turkish coffee. Suddenly, the real estate developers and their storm troopers began falling from the sky. They landed on every street, and began to round up the undesirable elements. Wearing pinstriped haz-mat suits, they rounded up the poor and the weird, the overweight and the ironic. They rounded up the depressed and the unkempt. They rounded up the slutty and the vague. They rounded up the absurdist playwrights and the owners of the pawnshop trumpets. They built prison camps for the creative and the strange.

Overnight, every public space became a branded environment. Overnight, our lives became new and improved. We live our days, now, under camera surveillance. We smile for the cameras. We keep one eye on the cameras. We live without joy or anger. We hum along with pre-selected music to suit our time-of-day mood. We buy our clothes from the punk department of major retailers. We shuffle along in lines to bow before baristas. We wait our turn for five-dollar lattes and two-hundred-dollar blue jeans. We have corporate emblems engraved in our flesh, and vacant smiles planted on our faces. We no longer believe in ghosts. We have our teeth professionally whitened.

If some of us dream of a wilder thing or two, if some of us dream of a dirty, lost, ancient city, we are careful to keep these dangerous things to ourselves.

Blackie and the Rodeo Kings - *Let's Frolic Again*

Release date: May 1, 2007

Label: True North Records

Tracks: 14

Rating: 3

Blackie and the Rodeo Kings is a three-piece outfit that plays—get ready for this—folk and country music. This record is the second in a double set that was originally planned as one album, entitled *Let's Frolic*. With 29 songs set to record on that first record, though, they split the difference and shortly afterward released *Let's Frolic Again*. While it's always nice to know that a band is enthusiastic enough to come up with

too many songs to fit them all on one record, I don't really see what the charm was in one, let alone two, of these.

Granted, I am certainly not a connoisseur of country or of modern folk music, but I like to hear something every now and again that throws me off the usual run of the CD player. And to be fair, I still sing along with a fair share of country songs when I go back to my hometown bar—I don't *dislike* country, per se, at least not in terms of musical ingenuity and entertainment value. That said, I am not a fan of this album.

Blackie and the Rodeo Kings have established a very pure country base to their music, and on top of that added differing degrees of joviality and Irish pub atmosphere. I can tell they are fun musicians; that they are out for a good time playing together and that aside from this they also know what they're doing on their instruments. The thing is, although this attitude might come through for them if they played in an actual bar or an otherwise small, intimate setting, the mood just isn't captured on a purely audio medium. This is something I can imagine in a smoky old bar (somewhere very rural where you're still allowed to smoke inside) with middle-aged cowboys stomping around in their boots, drinking whiskey and two-stepping. The record wouldn't come anywhere near my own collection, however.

What's the problem, you might ask? In terms of talent, I've got to say that the vocals are rather shaky at times and the songwriting does nothing to make a listener sit back in awe. It's not a new sound, it's not particularly polished, and I'm guessing that the only place this music feels at home is in the background of a very redneck conversation. Let's just say that I wouldn't throw them off the stage, but I wouldn't put them on the stereo either.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Meaningful Consequences

Do you remember the age of innocence? I'm not talking about some long-forgotten era of old. I'm talking about when we were young, when life was simpler.

If you're a male baby boomer chances are you were a young adult in the 1970s. Do you remember primping for a date or a night out with friends? Odds are you showered, shampooed your hair, chose your clothes with thought. Just before leaving the house you splashed on aftershave, took one last look in the mirror and dashed out the door with car keys in hand. If there was any trouble at all that night it probably amounted to a dust-up over a girl in the parking lot outside a dance hall.

Fast-forward 30 years. Too many young men today have added one more step to their routine. Before heading out to the bars and clubs, an alarming number of men are packing a knife. Even more shocking is the number of men who will use that knife, often with fatal results.

Can someone please explain to me what sort of thought process this takes? How do you decide one day that you need to carry a knife? Where do you go to buy one? How do you pick the style, the blade length, the concealability of it? What is the rationale: protection or acts of aggression?

Is there any issue on earth important enough to warrant plunging that knife into another human being? Is there any thought given to the consequences of that action? Or is it simply the result of alcohol- or drug-fuelled rage and stupidity? Does the spectre of jail time mean so little as a deterrent? When did human life become disposable?

It's apparent I have more questions than answers. Sadly, the same is true of law enforcement and social service agencies. A few years ago I sat through several youth court sessions watching the wheels of justice turn in the case of my stolen car. I was not quite a neophyte. I have been a fee justice of the peace since 1978 and have seen my share of criminal code charges, warrants, and dumb criminals. This time I was on the other side of the fence as a victim of crime. Frankly, I was appalled and disgusted at the lack of respect for the court shown by the gallery.

The only other thing rivalling my disgust was watching the youth court judges in action. Good grief, I've demonstrated more engaged, forceful, convincing, authoritative, tougher, louder action disciplining my own kids during a household squabble. Here were these people in authority accepting shoddy behaviour, mumbling their questions, accepting asinine explanations for 30 hours of community service not completed in a year's time, and finally delivering laughable judgments.

I realize it's simplistic to lay this mess at the feet of the court because, obviously, parenting plays a huge part, but shouldn't actions have consequences—meaningful consequences? Using a knife to injure or kill should have consequences, from where I sit.

AUSU THIS MONTH



AGM 2007

All AUSU Members Invited

The AUSU Annual General Meeting for 2007 will be held on June 18 at 6:00 p.m. by teleconference. All AUSU members are invited to attend. If you are currently in an open AU undergraduate course, or have completed a course in the last six months, you are an AUSU member.

While members are invited to observe all AUSU meetings, at the AGM, members may also participate in the meeting, ask questions, and vote! This year we will present important updates to our bylaws, so member input is vital. There will be discussion on all proposed changes.

Contact our office at ausu@ausu.org or 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413 for more information. Also, watch our website for a link to our annual report, which will be available shortly.

Changes to Council Executive

The AUSU "cabinet" does the shuffle

AUSU councillors are elected for two-year terms and, traditionally, the three executives also serve for two years. In early 2005, however, council began to discuss the possibility of holding a mid-term executive election. This term, councillors developed a new executive election policy to allow for the option of a mid-term election each term. In mid-March, council decided to hold a mid-term election for this year.

Lonita Fraser, VP External for AUSU for the last two years, decided not to run at this time due to a high course load, and she has moved to a regular councillor without portfolio position.

New councillor Huma Lodhi, who has been with council for one year, chose to run for VP Finance, due to her experience on the AUSU Finance Committee over the last year.

VP Finance for the past three years, Karl Low, chose to run for the vacant VP External position.



Lisa Priebe, President for the last two years, opted to run again for her position.

The three candidates were acclaimed to their positions at a special meeting of council held on April 16, 2007. As both outgoing executives are still with council and available to assist their successors, the changeover is expected to be very smooth.



At Home: Loonie poised to reach parity with the buck

Over the past five years, the Canadian dollar has increased by 43.4% (according to CTV News), a strikingly high increase rate that saw it reach a 30-year high of 94.77 cents on the American dollar on June 4.

Several reasons have been cited for the steady increase, and while most economists are happy to say it is the strengthening Canadian economy that is responsible, others point out that this latest rise comes before a pending interest rate hike. Shaun Osborne, the chief currency strategist for TD Securities, has been quoted as saying that the American dollar is "weak"¹ and that Canada's currency is not the only one experiencing a rise in the last few years.

Canada's loonie has risen roughly 10% this past year. However, Doug Porter, BMO Capital Markets senior economist, has said that "commodity prices did not really budge in the past week [to match the most recent hike in dollar values] and in fact

are only up slightly since the start of 2007."²

The CBC News article explains that Canadian currency has generally relied on commodity prices to support raises or dictate downturns: as our economy is based largely on production and exportation of goods, the loonie must follow the whims of the commodity and unless prices rise simultaneously we are not in the best shape to reach par with the American dollar by the end of the year, as some hopeful watchers claim.

The reality remains that although the American dollar has sunk in value over the last few years, our loonie has seen increased investment and valuations. For example, in 2001 - 2002, our dollar was pretty much on par with the Australian dollar. Now, however, while the Canadian dollar sits near 95 cents the Aussie dollar has remained 17 cents lower on conversion. Regardless of a specified time frame, the hope is that our own currency will match American money dollar for dollar and stay there for the duration.

¹ CTV News, 2007. "Canadian dollar closes at 94.48 cents US." Retrieved June 5, 2007, from http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070604/loonie_dollar_070604/20070604/

² CBC News, 2007. "Dollar on the march to 95 cents US." Retrieved June 5, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/money/story/2007/06/04/dollar.html>

In Foreign News: CITES continues to fight the ivory trade; southern Africa fights back

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) will be meeting again soon in The Hague, and among discussion over the protection of sawfish, cedars, coral, and Chinese tigers is the always-hot topic of elephant hunting and the ivory trade. The Convention will play host to 175 national delegates over the course of two weeks, as well as various representatives from the United Nations and conservation and animal welfare groups. The debate on the ivory trade is not as close to resolution as CITES delegates,

not to mention the world public, might hope, because although nations like Kenya and Mali are pushing for a 20-year ban on elephant hunting, South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia want to increase ivory trade.

According to Afrol News, the southern African states are not facing a degradation of the elephant population. In fact, they claim the situation is quite the opposite and that "while elephants remain an endangered species in most of Africa and international ivory trade is illegal to prevent poaching, the three Southern African nations sustain large national elephant populations that need to be kept healthy by controlled hunting."¹

This stance is just one of the worries of CITES activist groups like the International Fund for Animal Welfare, whose spokesperson Peter Pueschel said that "every time CITES even talks about relaxing the ivory ban, poaching goes up."²

Although CITES has agreed that these three countries might be able to legally trade in ivory due to their specific circumstances, the Convention has yet to reach agreeable terms for the trade. Their worry is that if southern African ivory enters the world market, copycat ivory may enter the market simultaneously although the product is being obtained illegally in northern countries. At the moment, Botswana is holding its existing ivory stores in hopes that it will get the green light from CITES soon and be able to sell the ivory for necessary revenue.

Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa are hoping for an agreement to be reached by the end of the two-week Convention, while animal activists remain adamant that ivory should not be sold or obtained under any circumstances.

¹ Afrol News. "Southern Africa's ivory sales put on ice." March 19, 2007. Retrieved June 5, 2007, from www.afrol.com/articles/11948

² BBC News, 2007. "Nations meet to protect wildlife". Retrieved June 5, 2007, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/6715923.stm>

EDUCATION NEWS



U.S. University Offers Tuition Waiver to Aboriginal Canadians

A little-known program at the University of Maine provides tuition, fees, and accommodation to undergraduate or graduate students “who can prove membership in a state or federally recognized tribe or can prove direct descent from a member”¹—and this tuition waiver is also available to members of recognized Canadian tribes.

Currently, there are about 500 students enrolled in the University of Maine system through the waiver, known as The University of Maine Native American Waiver and Scholarship Program. The program was established in 1934, and in 1971 was extended “to include all North American Indians.”¹

Applicants living outside Maine must reside in the state for one year before applying to the program. However, students who attend the university while fulfilling their 12-month residency requirement “may be eligible for a special incentive scholarship, reducing their first year of tuition to in-state rates.”²

The university campus is also home to the Wabanaki Center, which studies Maine’s four largest tribes: the Penobscot, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet.

According to Shaerri Mitchell, a graduate student, the Wabanaki Center provides a welcoming environment for aboriginal students, particularly those whose university experience may be their first time away from a small community. “It’s a safe place,” she says. “It provides students with a set of relations within the university community.”¹

More information about the waiver program can be found in the university’s Fact Sheet at <http://factsheets.umaine.edu/UWP/12-NAS%20WS.pdf>

¹ New York Times, 2007. “With Tuition Waiver, Maine Invests in Its ‘First People’.” Retrieved June 2, 2007, from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/28/us/28maine.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

² University of Maine. *Native American Waiver and Scholarship Program Fact Sheet*. Retrieved June 2, 2007, from <http://factsheets.umaine.edu/UWP/12-NAS%20WS.pdf>

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