

THE

VOICE

MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 08

February 27, 2009

Voice Writing Contest

Snowstorms and
censorship

Polymetric

Talking to T@b

On Film

Valkyrie



Plus:

*From Where I Sit, Music to Eat Lunch To,
Porkpie Hat, and much more...*

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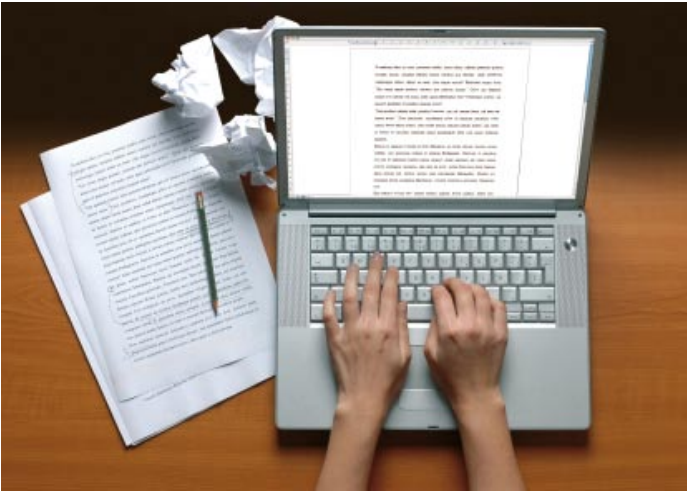
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



THE 2008 VOICE MAGAZINE WRITING CONTEST!



And the Winners Are . . .

With all the great submissions in the 2008 *Voice* writing contest, the judges had their work cut out for them! The decisions are now in and we're pleased to announce that the winners are:

Fiction - "Snowmagedon" by Pamela Wagner

Non-Fiction - "Shut My Mouth" by Adam Thackeray

Each of the winners will receive one 3-credit Athabasca University undergrad course. And, of course, the thrill of seeing their name in print!

This week, we bring you the winning fiction entry, "Snowmagedon" (graphics have been added by *The Voice*). In evaluating this piece, judges remarked that "it is graceful and compressed, like poetry, highly suggestive in relevant ways related to a central situation and image."

We hope you enjoy it. You can read the winning non-fiction entry, "Shut My Mouth" by Adam Thackeray, in next week's issue. Thanks to the judges for their contribution of time and energy, and all the wonderfully creative writers who submitted their work!

Snowmagedon

Buried . . .

I try to open my eyes. Useless. There is a weight above, cold all around. What is the last thing I remember? Trying to think forces me to stay awake. Where am I?

Think. I stopped at a field to walk in the snow. It was gently snowing then.

Snow. Is that what is pressing down on me? Am I buried in snow? Did I tell my husband where I was going? Of course not; I never do. I just go.

Buried. Alive. Cold. Will they find me in t...

Playing

Swirling, swooshing. The toboggan zooms down the hill.

I love watching the kids play while I drink my hot coffee. Holding the cardboard takeout mug in my mittened hands warms me. Seeing the steam escape reminds me of the stove, warmth. I'm cold.

A scream: "Mummy, Terry fell."

I toss the coffee, half full, into the garbage can, and take off in a run to rescue.

A giggle: "Never mind, he's just covered in snow."

The laughter reassures me. But damn, I lost my coffee. Never mind, Terry and Tanya, playing together like I want them to, at least for today.

Baggage

"We don't have your bags." That's all she said.

"What do you mean none of the bags can be unloaded? The flight has been cancelled. I want my bags right now!"

"Sir, do not take that tone of voice with me. Homeland Security is just over there and I can have you arrested. Get back in line. Now. I will deal with you when it is your turn."

And so he got back in line. And he did not get his bags. And although his flight was grounded because of the snowstorm, his luggage went on a trip.

The first place was sunny and warm. The bags soaked up the heat on the tarmac. They got to know a bag from California. They had a lot in common: they were both green and extremely large. They liked that there were other bags like them. Most of the luggage had wheels and a pull arm for easy moving. It was comforting to know they were not alone.

The next plane took them across the continent to the ocean. The winds whipped them, the snow flew hard. They were covered with ice and although they were sturdy bags, they felt vulnerable. And cold. And they had to wait for a very long time.

When they finally got back to Buffalo, they were exhausted but they had had an adventure of a lifetime. Now they have to wait again to be picked up. Sigh.

But what a trip!

Homeless

We don't think about them much when there is a snowstorm—the ones without a home. There are wind chill warnings: schools and government buildings are opened up for them to get shelter. But some don't want that. They are on the street, and they stay that way.

Lana patrols, looking for the ones who have refused to find a warm place for the night; but no matter how experienced she is, she doesn't find them all.

They are lost in the night, in the snow, in the cold.

Robbie rubs his hands to get them warm over the burning garbage can.

"Hey, get back, man, we all need some of that!" someone shouts at him.

"Fuck you," he says. And then again, "Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you!" Robbie likes the way the words come off his tongue. He loves the power the words evoke.

But others like the words too. "No—Fuck you!" And someone smashes him away from the fire, the light. He twirls away into the night. He runs blindly for awhile, then bumps into Lana.



"Where you been, Robbie?"

"Around."

"Have you seen anyone else?"

"Nope."

Still

It is so quiet outside. No one shovelling yet, no cars barrelling down the street. The wind is whipping up too much and the snowplows haven't even begun to come down this street. Martha doesn't mind. She is safe inside her warm home, the maid gone to bed, the grandchildren unable to visit because of the snow.

She stares out the window, the fire reflected in the window. The lights on the Christmas tree blink. It is silent. The only sound is the crackling of the logs. She loves this time—when the world stops for a few moments and she is alone, warm, cozy, inside her castle.

Snowperson



I'm a rinky dinky snowman.

And I wear a purple hat.

I have a rinky dinky carrot nose.

And that my friend is that.

What do you expect? I'm a snowman—not a poet. Snowperson really. Everyone thinks all the snowpeople are snowmen. Didn't think snowpeople could be feminists eh? Well, I am. Not that I know my sex. I could be male or female. But I don't care.

All I know is this is my time. The harder it snows, the longer I stay. The cold doesn't bother me. I long for the cold and snow like people long for warmth.

I have no choices though. People do. They can get warm whenever they like. Me. I can't stay this way when the sun comes out and begins to melt me. It's too late. And then I'm gone.

But for now, I stay.

For the day.

Hey! Hey!

Tragedy

No one expects a healthy group of young men in their prime to die when they are not in combat. Having fun. Enjoying themselves. Innocent.

That morning, 11 of them went out to snowmobile. An old sport, made sexy by equipment, and daring. The avalanche conditions were rated as considerable. Not a dangerous designation—just cautionary. But they had no fear. They could handle it.

They had been making circles, chasing one another, whooping it up. The wall of snow awed them. They stopped for a moment to admire the majesty of it.

But when they revved up their engines, a cloud passed over the sun. Just for a moment. And someone got stuck, calling out to the others.

Perhaps that's what brought down the first avalanche.

No one really knows. Not the eight who are dead. And not the three who lived. Their memories are sketchy. Their minds come back to the moment when they decided to leave, after the second avalanche. When they had to flee for their own lives.

They had to leave their friends behind. How do you make such a choice? To stay. Or to protect yourselves? To give up on friends, people who are closer to you than family. They were young and invincible. Full of hope, new life, relationships, marriages, love, children. Full of the future.

. . . Alive

He tunnels through the snow. He's never seen snow before. He loves the feel of the cold against his coat. Leaping up, ears flapping, snow flying, to tunnel once more.

He never tires. Through the field, through the snow where no one has stepped. The snow is virgin, fresh, there is nothing here but him and the snow.

His owner watches from the truck. He keeps it running to stay warm.

A car slows down and stops. The police officer says, "Hey, that dog sure likes the snow."

"Yup, he does."

"We've had a bit of a problem here."

The owner tightens up. Has he been doing something wrong?

"A woman is missing in the snow."

They notice at the same moment that the dog has stopped tunnelling and is now digging furiously.

The two men rush out of their vehicles, doors bang loud in the still air. When they get there, they see her. The woman buried in the snow three days ago.

"We found her," the police officer says into his radio.

She is now unburied. Alive.



ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



You Don't Need to Know

It's a funny thing about setting government policy in a democracy: most of the time, citizens expect their leaders to live up to the standards that they set.

Which makes it especially interesting that a couple of recent events have hit the news so close together.

The first is that the Tories are going to begin demanding more transparency in the way Canada's native reserves spend their money. It's a reasonable demand: there's no secret that corruption and

financial mismanagement are widespread on reserves. (This *Montreal Gazette* [article](#) and *National Post* [series](#) document the problem well.)

It's the first time since 2002 that Ottawa has tried to reform accountability on reserves. At that time, the First Nations Governance Act, tabled by the Liberals, met strong resistance from the chiefs in charge of the Assembly of First Nations. This new attempt at reform will focus on transparency, especially in the way billions of dollars of funding are being used (or, in many cases, misused).

Yet at the same time, the Harper government seems intent on maintaining its own atmosphere of secrecy, something that flies in the face of their demand for Native accountability. The recent listeriosis tragedy is a case in point, but the concealment goes well beyond that—straight to an Access of Information Act that is becoming little short of a bad joke.

The listeriosis stonewalling centres on notes that were taken during conference calls during the outbreak. The Canadian Press made a request to the Privy Council Office (PCO) for "all transcripts and minutes." As the *Globe and Mail* reports, the Privy Council said they had the records but would need four months "to consult other government institutions."

But on February 10, Ann Wesch, the access to information director for PCO, denied the application, saying the notes "do not fall under the scope of this request." The reason? The notes were handwritten and not technically "transcripts and minutes." A flimsy excuse at best, especially when one of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary's definitions for transcribe is to "make a copy of, esp. in writing . . . write out (shorthand, notes, etc.) . . ."

The broader state of affairs has been documented by Stanley Tromp, a freedom of information specialist, in his report "Fallen Behind: Canada's Access to Information Act in the World Context." As Tromp told reporters, the Act began to disintegrate under the Liberals "but has now reached an 'appalling' state of institutionalized delays under the Conservatives."

It will be interesting, then, to watch the Tories begin their consultations next month with a straight face even while their own party is setting an example of obstruction and evasion.

There is no doubt that cleaning up the widespread financial corruption on reserves is overdue. But before the Tories work on bringing in a new era of transparency there, it would be reassuring to know they'd already learned those lessons at home.

ON FILM

John Buhler



Valkyrie

Tom Cruise's latest film, *Valkyrie*, set during the Second World War, seems to have made its retreat from the theatres. Nevertheless, it is a very interesting movie, not only for the story on the screen, but also for the controversy that surrounded its production.

A portrayal of historical events and a nail-biting thriller, the story itself is extremely dramatic and compelling. The 20th of July, 1944 attempt on Hitler's life was organized and carried out by members of the German military. Colonel Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, who had been maimed in an attack by a low-flying fighter plane in North Africa, carried a bomb into the conference hut in Hitler's "Wolf's Lair" Headquarters in East Prussia.

After the bomb exploded, and they believed that Hitler was dead, the conspirators initiated a coup in which the top Nazis and the SS were to be arrested and the war brought to an end.

Within a matter of hours, however, it became clear that Hitler had survived. The plan unravelled, hampered by hesitation and uncertainty, only to be shattered by the unquestioning loyalty of Hitler's supporters. The

conspirators were ruthlessly rounded up and executed.

Tom Cruise, as Stauffenberg, plays the central character in the plot to kill Hitler. *Valkyrie's* relatively large cast of conspirators is introduced quickly, generally as Cruise's character recruits them for the resistance movement. We hardly get to know their names, and little else about them. Regrettably, most of these characters remain underdeveloped.

We do, however, realize the risk taken by each of the conspirators, and see them shot, tried, hanged, or committing suicide in the aftermath of the attempt to assassinate Hitler. Unfortunately, *Valkyrie* makes it appear that only a handful of brave people lost their lives. This is completely misleading. As the Third Reich continued to implode, and the Fuehrer's wrath spun out of control, a climate of paranoia and a thirst for revenge prevailed.

Five thousand individuals were executed as a result of the July 20 plot against Hitler. By then, the Nazis had stopped reporting the executions in the press, not wanting ordinary Germans to realize how much support there had been behind the bomb plot. It is a tragic oversight that the film tells us nothing about the scope of the conspiracy and its consequences.

Many of the scenes in *Valkyrie* were filmed on location in Berlin. The Bendler Block's Offices of the Army High Command is now a museum devoted to the resistance movement. These are the offices in the film where some of the conspirators work as senior military personnel, and later issue orders during the attempted coup. In the courtyard of the same building is the site where Stauffenberg and co-conspirators Werner von Haeften, Friedrich Olbricht, and Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim were executed in front of a firing squad. The use of the Bendler Block, so closely associated with the July 20 plot, gives greater poignancy to the film.

Given this background, the actual making of the film provided as much intrigue as the conspirators on the screen.

Shooting a film in Germany with lead actor and United Artists' producer Tom Cruise, however, was risky business. On this side of the Atlantic, we are likely to think of Cruise's couch-jumping, medical advice-dispensing, and supposed Katie-controlling antics as ridiculous celebrity tabloid material, but German officials view Cruise's religion, the Church of Scientology, as a dangerous cult.

Accused of employing cult-like practices to financially exploit its members, the group is under observation by that country's security service.

A series of articles by Andrew Purvis in *Time* magazine has covered Germany's ongoing efforts against Scientology, a religion based on the writings of science fiction author L. Ron Hubbard. *Time* reported that in a 1995 judicial ruling, the Church of Scientology lost its recognition as a religious organization in Germany, with the judge concluding that the group was "masquerading as a religion in order to make a profit."

Furthermore, a report from interior ministers of the German states had claimed that "the Scientology organization, agenda and activities are marked by objectives that are fundamentally and permanently directed at abolishing the free democratic basic order . . ." Moreover, in 2004, a Cologne judge ruled that Scientology threatens the legal rights of its members, and among other practices even "brainwashes" them.

Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia, also documents Germany's opposition to the group, including information that lawyers, representing the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, allege "that Hubbard had written that civil rights . . . should be restricted to Scientologists."

It is not only the German authorities, however, that have a problem with Scientology. It has even been reported that Stauffenberg's son, Berthold, considers the religion to be a "totalitarian ideology."

In response, Scientologists counter that 10 years of intense scrutiny by the German government had not found any evidence of anti-constitutional activities or illegal practices. Furthermore, a recent attempt by German authorities to have the organization banned merely ended in failure.

Given this background, the actual making of the film provided as much intrigue as the conspirators on the screen. Many Germans were outraged to learn that Cruise, so highly visible in a suspect organization, planned to use the historic Bendler Block memorial and portray Stauffenberg, an almost sacred German resistance figure.

"Tom Cruise is not just Tom Cruise, but a figurehead of an anti-constitutional organization, and he should be treated that way," Ursula Caberta, the head of the Scientology Task Force of the Hamburg Interior Authority, was quoted as saying in a *Time* article.

Britain's *The Guardian* suggested that some Germans actually equate Cruise's role within the Church of Scientology with that of Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels. "If a man aggressively representing this sect [Scientology] plays one of our national heroes this is naturally going to result in emotional comments," explained Bernd Neumann, Germany's Culture Minister. The reaction was, in other words, a far cry from the "You had me at 'Hello'" greeting Cruise received in a much less contentious cinematic role.

Even if Germans are still suspicious of Scientology, there was obviously a thaw in their relationship with Tom Cruise and the makers of *Valkyrie*. *Time* reported that Germany initially denied Cruise use of the Bendler Block, yet in an apparent about-face, the German government not only allowed filming in the building, but the German Federal Film Fund provided \$6,000,000 US in financial support for the project. (The German government routinely helps to fund films made in Germany).

Furthermore, the last surviving member to the bomb plot, Philipp von Boeselager, the man who procured the bomb, indicated in an interview with Germany's *Stern* magazine shortly before his death May 1, 2008, that he had no problem with Scientologist Tom Cruise portraying Stauffenberg, as long as the actor did not proselytize.

Clearly, having received permission to portray the attempted coup on location in Berlin, in spite of Germany's official and unofficial hostility toward Scientology, Cruise himself produced something of a coup. In making this film, is it possible that Cruise was—like resistance hero Stauffenberg—attempting to bring about a change in German policy? Could this lead to a greater public acceptance of Scientology within Germany?

Regardless of our feelings about Tom Cruise or Scientology, it is easy for English-speaking audiences to identify with the plotters in the film. That probably has something to do with the fact that, although the principle characters are all associated with the German military, they have American or British accents.

Thus, Stauffenberg, a German count and Wehrmacht officer, along with his fellow conspirators are all transformed into good Anglo-American allies. Their speech is so stripped of "Germanness" that Cruise even mispronounces Goebbels' name. It was therefore amusing to see that the closing credits actually include a "Dialect coach." A standard Hollywood stereotype (or rather bigotry) is reinforced, nevertheless, with only the evil people having German accents.

In spite of the film's shortcomings, Cruise is convincing as the maimed Stauffenberg, determined to end Hitler's regime even if it requires a daring act that puts him, his co-conspirators, and his own family at risk.

With themes of conspiracy, high treason, and a political assassination, this film has the *feel* of an action film reminiscent of *Mission Impossible*. Yet it takes on a historical subject, without sacrificing accuracy. *Valkyrie's* fast-paced plot, accompanied by a musical score that is at times like a ticking bomb or a speeding train, is riveting and exhilarating. We already know that the conspirators are doomed to fail, yet the film gives audiences a gripping, suspenseful, and tension-filled ride.

And, as *Valkyrie* heads toward its inevitable release on DVD, it will be just as interesting to see, in the long run, how this film influences the way in which Germans view Tom Cruise and Scientology.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Andy Flinn of T@b

T@b is a Nova Scotia-based folk-jazz duo (comprising Ariana Nasr and Andy Flinn) that writes fiendishly clever songs to wizardly accompaniment and engages its audiences in mesmerizing performances.

They've also made a name for themselves as music promoters, offering local musicians a venue in Night Kitchen, their weekly variety show in Wolfville, and the AMP (Acoustic Music Producers) festival.

You can read the Voice review of their new live CD, New Teeth on Stage, in this issue. The following are

notes from a conversation between T@b member Andy Flinn and Wanda Waterman St. Louis.

Part I: From Shoe-Gazing to Acts of Love**Meeting Ariana**

I had a recording studio in Toronto and I was doing a recording project with some former bandmates. I asked Ariana to play saxophone on it. Right after that we started a project called Tic-Tac, which was like T@b music only instrumental.

We toured with that all across the country, in bookstores like Chapters and Indigo. There were people peeping out from behind the bookshelves going, “*What in the h— is that?*”

We were very slow learners in playing music that people might like. We're still learning. Good music doesn't necessarily mean popular music or music you can live off. But we've come a long way since playing polymetric instrumental music in 13/4 and 7/4 time—at the same time—for unsuspecting library and bookstore dwellers.

I Write the Songs

I'm sort of the primary writer and for our songs to make it out of our house Ariana has to say, “Yeah, I might sing that.” So there's an automatic review. I've tried making her sing stuff that she didn't like to sing and it didn't work.

She can sing anything but the message in the song has to be worth her while. For the most part we think “If it ain't good don't say it.”

We are constantly negotiating what we're going to play. It's the consensus-building thing; the larger the group, the more difficult it is to build consensus. Two is the easiest number within which to reach consensus, other than with yourself.

How Did I Get Here?

I played garage rock first. I was forced to take piano lessons for half a year. That didn't pan out because I'd come back and play the piece pretending to read the music but I was playing in the wrong key and it became obvious to the teacher.

My piano teacher ended up taking me to all these old cathedrals around where I grew up. We would go play the church organs and stick our fingers in the pipes and see if we could make them do overtones. That teacher was probably one of my bigger musical influences. He played baroque music, and that kind of polyphonic and multi-threaded music. That's partly where my polymetric obsession comes from.



Ariana comes from an altogether musical family. Her sisters, Sara and Kamila, are a folk duo. Their mom's a music teacher. Ariana had lessons on the violin and a few lessons on clarinet and saxophone, but she obviously ran away screaming and did her own thing.

For both of us, performing has not come easily. We were the classic shoe-gazers; we would play a really complicated song and stare up from our shoes only to mumble something incomprehensible to the shoes in the audience then return our eyes to our own shoe tips and continue with our show.

I remember once we were driving with Ariana's mom. We had just finished a show with Sara and Kamila in Toronto and were heading for Montreal. We asked, "Why did they sell eight CDs and we only sell one? Why do they love them more than they love us?" We got a lecture, of course.

An Act of Love

We're still working on our performances, to tell you the truth. We even took an acting improv class. There are so many details; it has to do with the clothing you wear, etc., making an effort. All of these things matter because we're asking people to be quiet while we play and to give us money, and when they come to a show they actually want the show to be good.

I think one of your responsibilities is to give them what they hope for. Some people may think that this sounds commercial, but it is in a sense an act of love.

CLICK OF THE WRIST - Top Model

The word 'model' usually conjures up images of überthin men and women gliding down designer runways, but *these* models offer something completely different: a look at what can be created when iconic items meet hours and hours of painstaking recreation.

Herod Temple

Alec Garrard, a 78-year-old retired farmer, has spent an incredible 33,000 hours building this reconstruction of Herod's temple. The model measures 20 feet by 12 feet and includes 4,000 miniature human figures, all sculpted by Garrard.

Titanic

There are plenty of models of the Titanic, but this is the first to be built from the original plans by shipbuilders Harland and Wolff. The 1:48 scale model cost £1.3 million and took seven years to create. Even the miniature "deck furniture, room furniture and . . . room décor were composed according to the exact proportions detailed in the source designs."

Incredible Ferrari Project

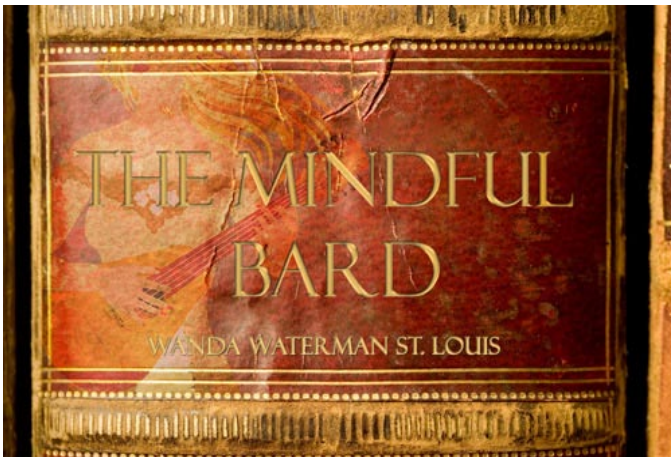
This model-builder started out with photos of a Ferrari 312 PB, then spent three years creating drawings and another 12 years building the precise scale model. Not only that, he also built the moulds for every single part. Oh, yes—and the engine and gearbox actually work.

Stardestroyer

If you're a *Star Wars* fan, you'll recognize the inside of an imperial star destroyer. And when the creators of a fan film decided to recreate one for their set, the result would have made George Lucas proud.

Shanghai 2020

This enormous scale model represents what the city of Shanghai may look like in 2020. It is already one of the largest urban areas in the world, and the futuristic model alone fills over 1,000 square feet.



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

CD: T@b, *New Teeth on Stage*

Release date: 2008

Label: Independent

“Squeezing Rhymes Through the Stencil of a Prejudiced Mind”

“Shelving words by the letter, lining up syllables better, being setter of bones of reality, the tones of

the t’s and the a’s and the e’s, oh please!

from “Words” by Flinn and Nasr, *New Teeth on Stage*

Although Ariana and Andy describe themselves as merely “potluck” Quakers (see *Voice* interview this issue) Ariana did come from a Society of Friends family. Now knowing this, I can’t listen to T@b’s music without thinking of all those people who went to prison in England centuries ago for refusing to doff their hats to nobility.

Because of their frequent incarcerations Quakers became great reformers of the prison system and other bastions of human cruelty.

Plus, it eventually became okay for *everyone* not to take off their hats in the presence of Lord or Lady Diddly-Squat.

You can’t deny the mysterious influence of centuries of Quakers on the songs in *New Teeth on Stage*, especially, I think, on “White Man God.”

In addition to their own songs they do a few numbers by friends, and they’ve chosen carefully. Jack McDonald’s “Bluenose Cowgirl” is a song to which any westward-yearning Maritimer can relate.

The bluegrass element, so integral to Fundy Shore Nova Scotia music, comes out strongly in Ariana’s fiddle playing in “General Store” by Jenny Ritter. And Chris Robinson’s delightful “Learning the Hard Way” is rendered magical by the treatment it gets here.



Andy's vocalized song rhythms, a cross between scatting and beat-boxing, are almost an extenuation of a Swiss accent in which every 'r' is a drum roll and vowels and consonants are annunciated in the extreme. You will probably not hear musical accompaniment like this anywhere else. Ever.

"Shopping Mall," an exercise in modern angst accompanied by a rolling Professor Longhair piano, is a post-consumerism hymn that you could found a church on if you believed in founding churches.

"Intertwined," a twisted tribute to the gluteus maximus, is no Queen rock anthem—it's something much more deeply satisfying, and on so many levels.

If you listen real hard you'll hear how minimalist the accompaniment really is, but even with just two or three instruments and two voices each song is busy with tantalizing sounds.

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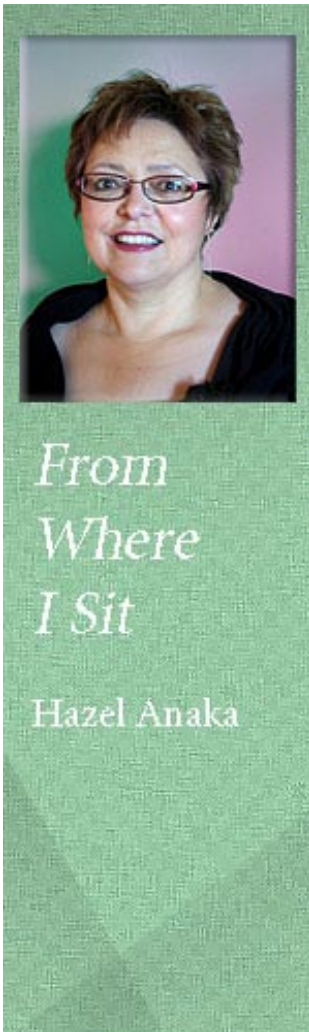
I'm a jazz gourmand—not gourmet—but I hear in this music the transcendent quality found in Miles Davis, Dave Brubeck, and John Coltrane; that capacity to lift the stupidity of this broken world and take it right out of the picture.

One of The Mindful Bard's criteria is that a work should stimulate the imagination and inspire the creation of more art. Well, it may be a coincidence, but I started two poems while listening to this CD, something I haven't done in over a year.

As if it weren't enough to manifest an amazing creative force, Ariana Nasr and Andy Flinn are at the vanguard of a global and local movement to transform the music industry from a castle fortress to a sprawling, *thriving*, peasant village. Their contagious excitement is fully justified; just check out [AMP Festival](#), [Night Kitchen](#), and [Tab Music](#) to see for yourself.

New Teeth on Stage manifests 10 of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it mocks existing injustices; 3) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; 4) it makes me want to be a better artist; 5) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 7) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 8) it is about attainment of the true self; 9) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 10) it stimulates my mind.

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.



Canasta Rules

This past weekend my sister Sherry, her fiancé Jim, Roy, and I went to Hinton to visit our youngest sister Gail, husband Todd, and daughter Hailey. The catching up was fun. The dinner out at the Chinese restaurant was good.

The best part, though, was sitting down to play canasta. Canasta is an old card game that we played as kids and young adults at home. Todd and Gail hadn't played for years so teaching them was a great refresher for all of us. It was fun to see if we could remember the rules of the game and for the most part we did.

Where disagreement arose we turned to the Internet as final arbiter. Just how many cards should be dealt? Answer: 13, using three decks of cards including jokers if six people are playing.

Are jokers and deuces wild? Yes. Are eights worth 10 points or just five? Ten. And so on for most of the first match as the subtle nuances of the game came back to us bit by bit.

Of course, team play is always, always, always more fun if teams split down gender lines. It allows for more teasing, stereotyping, fierce competition, and howls of protest and accusation. Somehow men just seem to be fair game, easy targets, terrible losers. And ours were no exception.

Having teams based on married couples could potentially be very dangerous and divisive. It could get personal and people could be hurt. Of course, in our case the women beat the men.

After two of the three men crapped out to watch the Oilers-Flames hockey game it was poor old Todd and the three sisters left fighting it out for supremacy. The hours flew by, the beer cans piled up, and the bottle of Gretzky's 99 red wine was drained. We played until each group had won a game. For a while it looked like we would need to play a grudge match Sunday morning before we left for home but we ran out of time.

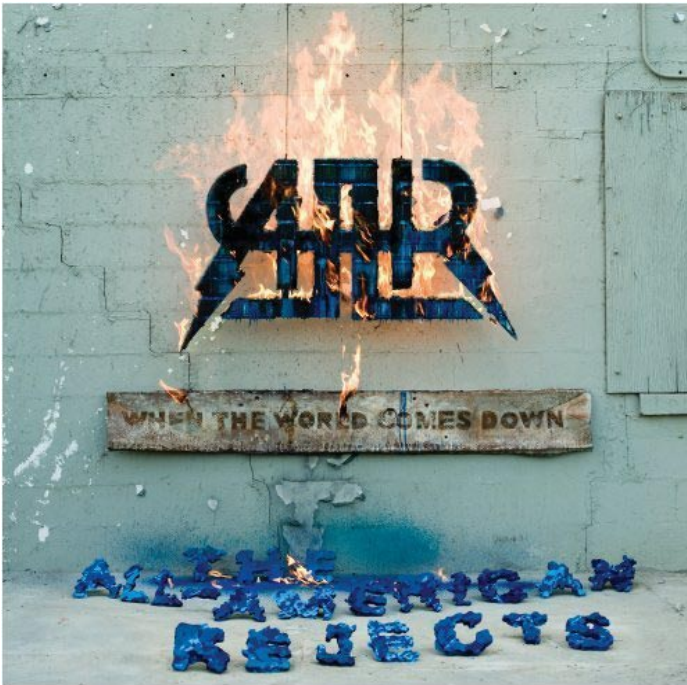
Without knowing (or even caring about) the origin of the game we had played canasta for years. It can be the reason for bringing people together for a social night. In fact, Sherry has suggested a monthly canasta night. There's another couple who would fit in perfectly. I can hear Terry's laugh already.

If we put our hearts into this we can start a winter tradition and move from good intentions to action. Some Internet research shows this game peaked in the 1950s. These current days of uncertainty and cost containment may find more and more people sticking close to home finding low- or no-cost amusement.

I like the idea of returning to simpler times of homemade entertainment. There's something old-fashioned, quaint, and warm about playing a low-tech game with living, breathing humans. There's no need for software or downloads or hunkering down in a darkened basement to play against a computer. Who knows—canasta may enjoy a resurgence in popularity. That would please me, from where I sit.

MUSIC TO EAT LUNCH TO

Mandy Gardner

All-American Rejects – *When the World Comes Down*

Release Date: December 16, 2008

Label: Interscope/Doghouse

Tracks: 12

Rating: 4

The All-American Rejects have remained in our peripheral vision since appearing on the big-time music scene in 2002 with their self-titled album, and managed to heighten their influence on radio DJs and listeners with 2005's *Move Along*.

The hit single of the same name brought in a much wider audience for the band, although critics and audiences alike had a little trouble understanding just what the All-American Rejects were trying to sound like.

It sounds like a snooty remark, but the truth is that when a largely unknown band pops onto the scene with a single that sounds a bit like energetic pop music but also a lot like slow rock, it can be confusing come record-store decision time. Trust that your favourite of the two sounds will prevail, or pass over it because of a fear that the other genre will have just a tad too much influence on the record?

"Move Along" was a decent match for the rest of the record, but it did have a pop aspect that the rest didn't quite match up to. Remember Smash Mouth's "Walkin' on the Sun," as opposed to all the other songs on *Fush Yu Mang?* Exactly.

In a very similar move, The All-American Rejects released the first single "Gives You Hell" from *When the World Comes Down*, a song that has a decidedly different groove than the other songs on the record. The unfortunate thing for listeners is that this single is actually the best song on the album, with few others coming close to this level of quality.

What is it that sets "Gives You Hell" apart from the rest of the album (aside from "Breakin'")? The energy of the recording. These two songs are fun, likeable, and energetic, something that, despite genre, most music listeners are looking for to some degree. The rest of *When the World Comes Down* is slow and, sorry to say, mediocre. There is nothing to hook a listener or to snag a new fan, despite the great potential of the band.

The All-American Rejects should maybe focus on the songs and singles that have studded their career and dissect why these songs have done so well. It is never my intention to encourage the production of more formulaic pop songs, but in this case I believe that the worst of the pop genre can be easily avoided by a band that has the ability to write songs with worthwhile lyrics and enjoyable music. All in all, this record and the band itself aren't living up to their virtually unlimited potential.

The Interviewer

It is the ninth decade of the twentieth century...

written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Rockhead #12: **OCD**

Later Helen drops in and turns on the tube and-- whaddya know-- there are the Ramones on MTV.

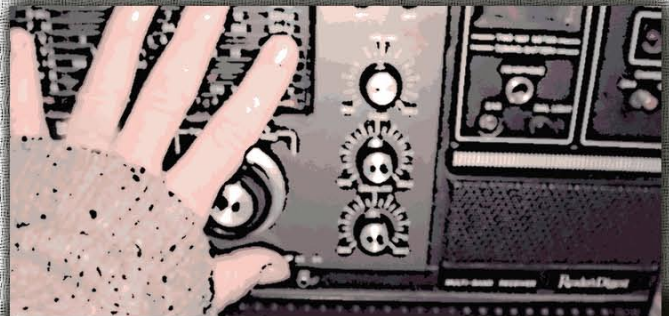


At CBGB's.

Helen nearly swoons at the sight of Joey, that great sentient spider twitching around on the stage.

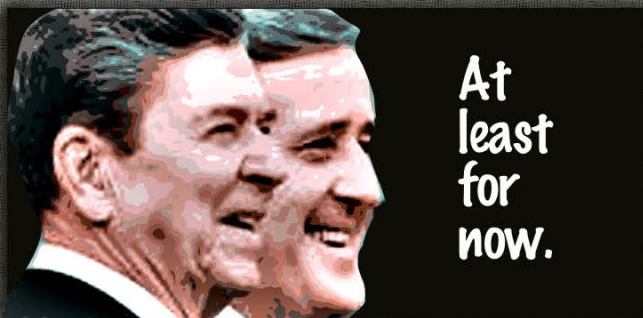


Her daughter Cass is showing signs of obsessive compulsive disorder...



...touching the radio in the same five spots every time she turns it on.

Helen is glad her daughter is growing up in a world where disabilities are cool.



At least for now.



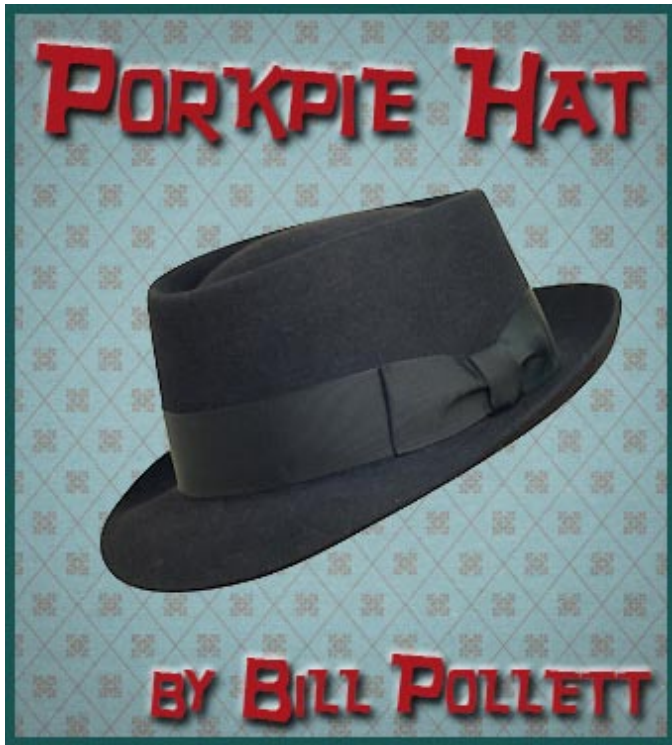
The next morning Reuben gets a call from Rob...



... saying that there had been an incident at the radio station the night before.

next: trouble at the will

Girls, make sure it doesn't chafe!



Story of a Travelling Girl

Once there was a travelling girl. When she was 12 years old, her parents (in an effort to minimize inconvenience and keep expenses down) took her into the woods and left her there.

They had some pangs of conscience (who wouldn't?) but consoled themselves with the thought that she would quickly and efficiently be murdered by gypsies, buried by a landslide, eaten by wolves.

Gifted with feet and voice, she passed the hours by improvising the roughest of songs, the crudest of dances.

Her dances and songs were filled with and inspired by the flapping of trees, the somersaulting of water on moss-covered rocks, the jitterbugging of fossils, the flamenco of storms, the madrigals and clumsy folk dances of the wolves who circled and sang about her sleeping head, the death-rattle droning and

slinking silvershiver of the accordions and fiddles played by passing nameless Travellers.

In this manner, she spent many happy days. She ate fish and roasted goat around campfires. She dangled upside down from the branches of trees. Occasionally she would lose a life. She would be murdered by wandering social workers or accountants. She would be buried beneath avalanches of indecipherable rules, or eaten by packs of roving expectations. Always, though, she would be reborn in the forest's womb.

One day, she knew somehow that it was time to travel. The song of leaving sang in her blood and whistled out between her teeth. Luckily, there was a narrow pathway right beneath her feet. Wanting to maybe one day find her way back to the heart of the forest, she left a trail of songs hidden along the way. She hid her songs beneath stones, in abandoned beehives, in the cracks at the back of caves, in the hollow skulls of foxes.

She walked day and night, sometimes forwards, sometimes backwards. She walked through deserts and over narrow mountain passes, coming across the occasional holy man and mad prophet. She passed through imperial bedrooms and plague-ridden slums. She walked across frozen rivers, through forbidden cities, and along the bottom of forgotten oceans. Sometimes she would catch a ride on palanquins or the shells of passing turtles. She stole bicycles and rowboats.

By way of payment for what she needed, what she took, she sang her songs into everything that would hold them: empty pockets, budding roses, open mouths, the sound hole of a lover's guitar. She was generous to the point of carelessness with all those flowing words, all those golden notes. She knew there would always be more.

Whether she ever made it home again, the records never showed.

AUSU THIS MONTH



2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The 2009 AUSU planner order form is up! You'll find the order form on the AUSU [home page](#).

Anyone who ordered early will have had their planner included in the first batch mailed out. If you did order early, you should have your new planner already!

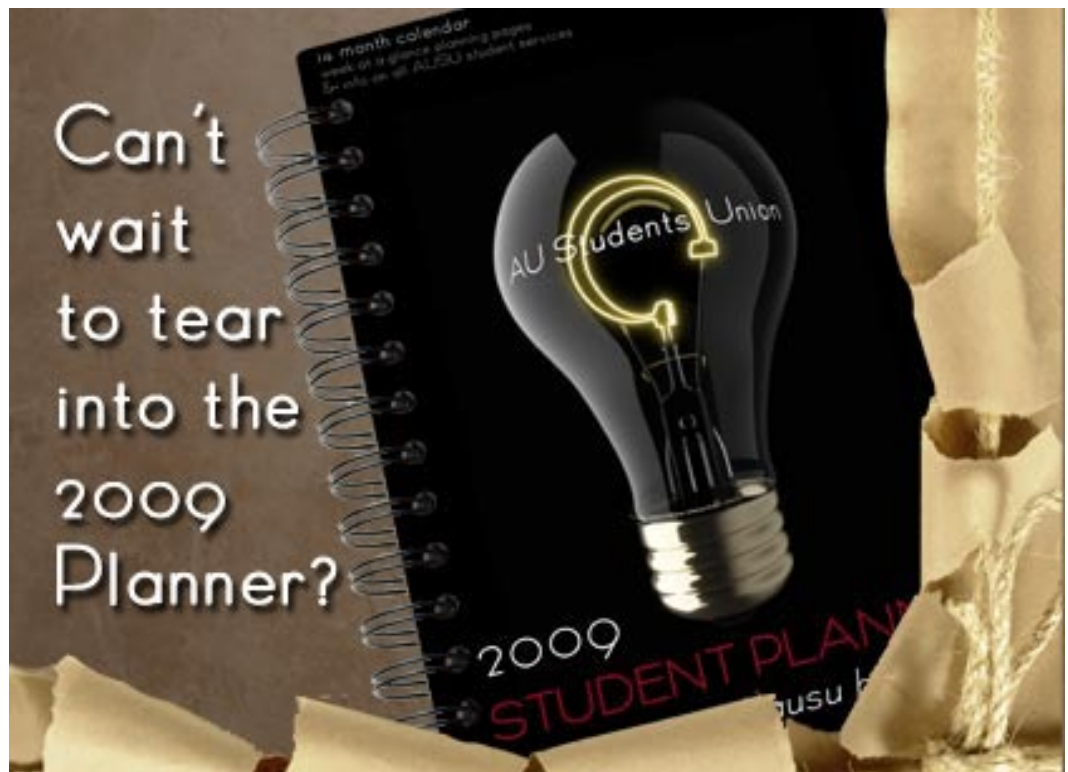
As always, we'll be excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go.

With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it.



The Voice memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.

AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination,

and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

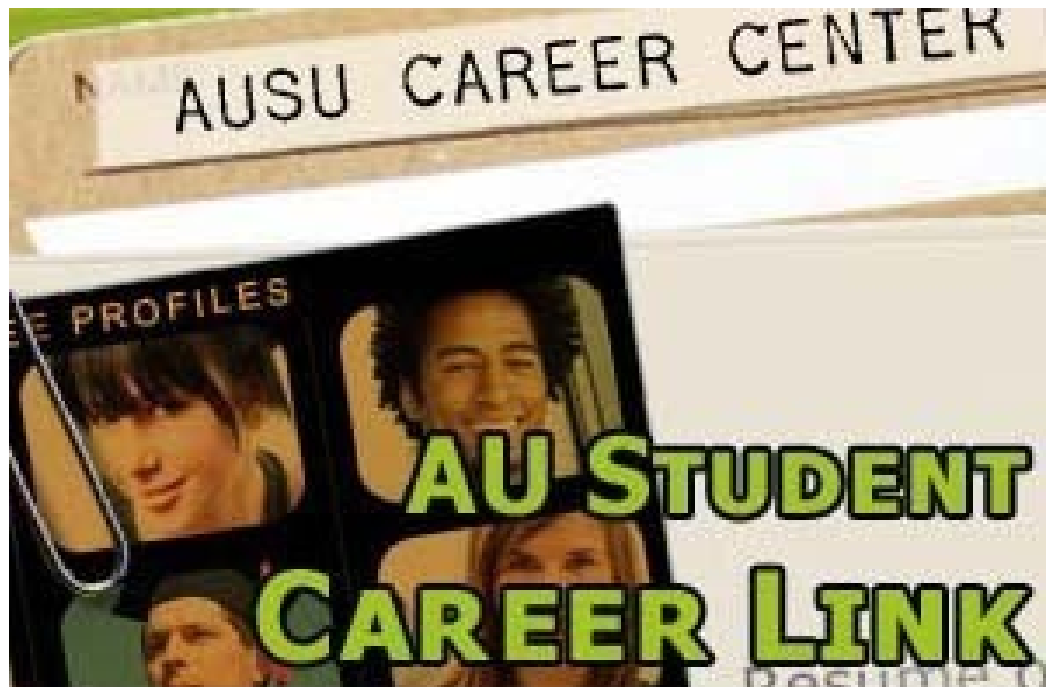
For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

Employment Site is here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student.



Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: BC gang files action against revenue minister

As the government tries to curb the growing gang violence in BC, one criminal organization has filed a court action over alleged leaks of Canada Revenue information.

As the [CBC](#) reports, the United Nations gang is “alleged to be one of the West Coast’s most powerful criminal organizations.”

In late 2007, it’s alleged that personal tax information was leaked from the Canada Revenue Agency—coincidentally, just before members of the UN Gang began to be targeted in a rash of violence.

It isn’t known whether the information leak was the result of a hacker or an insider working on behalf of gangs. Information stored by Revenue Canada includes personal data such as work and home addresses.

The allegation by the UN Gang is that information about their members was part of the leak, and the data could have been used by rival gangs. The UN Gang has since “filed actions in

the Federal Court of Canada against the minister of national revenue.” The allegations have not been proven in court and a decision is expected in April.

In Foreign News: Moroccan authorities target McDonald’s, Wikipedia in border dispute

Since Morocco began its occupation of Western Sahara in 1975, it has insisted the former Spanish colony is an “integrated part” of the country. While Western Sahara struggles to establish independence, the Moroccan government has taken the border battle international, targeting McDonald’s and Wikipedia in its effort to maintain control.

International standards chart Western Sahara as a separate country, and when Happy Meals in Morocco were discovered to contain tiny maps with a border between the countries, officials immediately insisted the “offending toys” be removed from the market. The Moroccan subsidiary of McDonald’s backed down, issuing a statement that “the toys included a small map on which the borders were incorrectly drawn. We profoundly regret making this mistake and we apologise to our loyal customers and our fellow citizens.”

The Moroccan government is also promoting its stance internationally by investing in lobbyists, lawyers, and “independent” pressure groups. One such group, the US “Morocco Board,” is urging Moroccans to use Wikipedia as a tool in the propaganda war.

As [afrol News](#) reports, the Morocco Board (which enjoys royal backing) is urging “Moroccans to enter Wikipedia articles about the Kingdom and the Western Sahara conflict and to edit them, giving instructions about how this is made and how they can avoid being banned by Wikipedia editing rules.”

EDUCATION NEWS

Jessica Skelton



Students study in Antarctica

NANAIMO (CUP) - L-A Shibish, a Vancouver Island University student, will be joining her peers from around the world in Antarctica next month.

"I'm in disbelief that I am actually going to Antarctica," said Shibish, who is in her second year of VIU's Tourism Studies Diploma program. "I'm ecstatic."

Shibish is one of 80 students from around the world taking part in an expedition celebrating International Polar Year—a large scientific program focused on the Antarctic and the Arctic that runs from March 2007 to March 2009.

Scientists from over 60 nations are taking part to examine a wide range of physical, biological, and social research topics. IPY includes over 200 projects, such as the student expedition to Antarctica.

"I was attracted to the IPY expedition by the opportunity to work with and learn from an international team of researchers, educators, scientists, and university students, and to see if I can discover a way to meaningfully contribute to raising awareness of the issues confronting Antarctica," said Shibish.

While the expedition is in Antarctic waters, Shibish and the other students will participate in lectures and lab exercises aboard the main ship.

They will also make frequent trips to the Antarctic mainland to study the positive and negative impact of tourism in this environmentally sensitive area, says Shibish.

Shibish is also looking forward to investigating "best practice" scenarios in regards to tour operations in remote coastal communities and conducting a survey of the other student participants' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism and the preservation of fragile eco-systems.

"I hope to learn, first-hand, about the reality of what is happening in the world's last great wilderness," said Shibish.

Shibish then wants to use this knowledge to educate others. When she returns, she aims to share her experience through a multi-media presentation.

"I feel an urgent sense of responsibility for the protection of sensitive and fragile environments and their wildlife," she said. "I feel humbled and honoured to have this opportunity."

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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