

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 24
June 19, 2009

Convocation 2009

Congratulations, Grads!

Photos, grad interviews,
and more

Telluric Currents

Universal imagination

My Intention

Savouring silence

Plus:

*Dear Barb, The Mindful Bard,
AUSU This Month, and much more...*



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**The Voice
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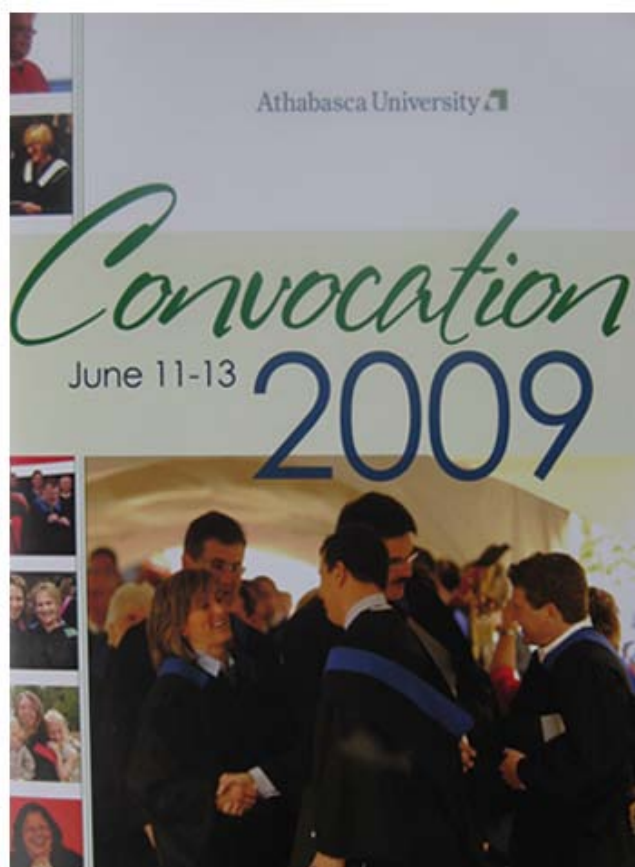
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



CONVOCATION 2009

Sandra Livingston



This is the first of a special three-part Voice report on Athabasca University's 2009 Convocation, which took place June 11, 12, and 13. The Voice offers its warmest congratulations to all this year's graduates!

If there's one word that represents Convocation 2009, it's "change." One of the most visible changes this year was the absence of the large, red-and-white striped tent where the ceremony has traditionally been held. Instead, guests and graduands enjoyed all the comforts of the Athabasca Regional Multiplex—complete with large screens that afforded everyone a great view.

More changes could be seen at the site of AU's future Academic and Research Centre (ARC). The centre will increase campus space by 50 per cent, and work was progressing even as convocation guests arrived.

But perhaps the most important change is the one that could be seen in the faces of AU's graduands: the sense of accomplishment in completing their degrees, and the new paths their education will help carry them along.

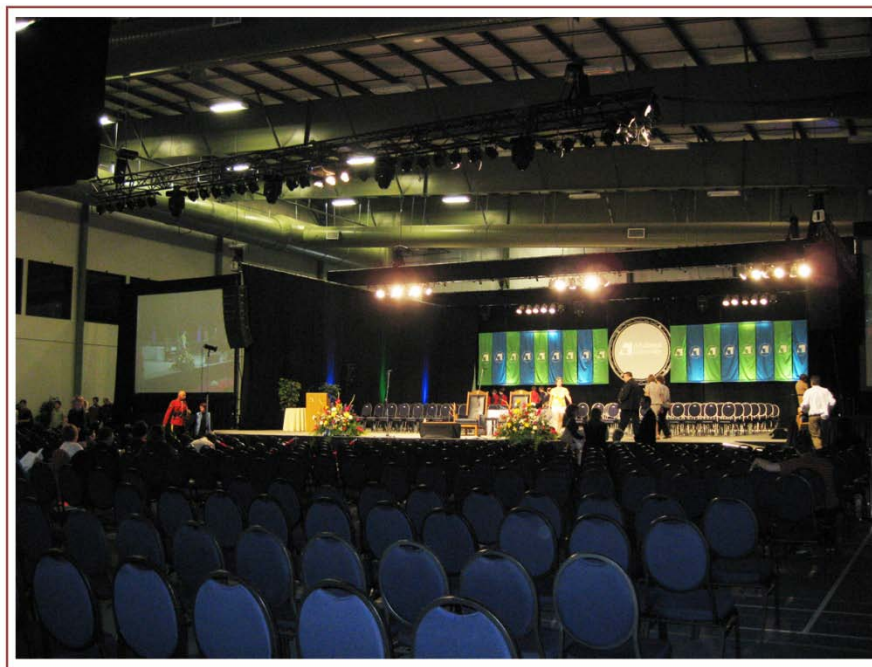
It could be heard in the many conversations that floated through the multiplex as graduands and their families enjoyed a sumptuous breakfast and explored the building: new careers, more studies, or the pride of being the first in their family to earn a university degree (an accomplishment that belongs to a remarkable 74 per cent of AU grads).

From Port St. Lucie, Florida, to Quesnel, BC, AU grads came together to celebrate the changes they've accomplished so far and the many that are still to come.

The skies were clear and sunny as graduands made their way to the large robing area, greeting old friends and making new ones. The sense of expectation grew as family members found their seats, and then it was time for Convocation 2009 to officially begin.



Welcome to Convocation 2009



Making sure every last detail is right!

The first sight to greet everyone was the richly coloured costumes of the Kokopelli Choir, their incredible voices leading the procession of academics and graduands.

Their performance led into a singing of *O, Canada*, and then a warm welcome was extended to everyone by Joy Romero, Chair of the Athabasca University Governing Council.

Noting that distance education allows students a unique opportunity to form bonds based on character, she also recalled the first AU convocation in 1997—an event with just two grads, compared to the 4,191 in the class of 2009!

Her remarks also touched on the new academic centre under construction, a building that will embody AU's principles by incorporating wide-open work spaces, a symbol of the university's philosophy of removing barriers.

Official greetings were offered by Paula Evans, councillor for the town of Athabasca, and Brian Bahry, deputy reeve for the county of Athabasca. As Dr. Frits Pannekoek delivered the president's remarks, he noted that AU is celebrating several new chairs, including one in Indigenous Studies. He also shared the fact that AU has the highest student satisfaction rate of all Alberta's universities, and affirmed the belief that, without the skills and achievements of AU grads, Canada would not be the envy of the world.



Registrar James D'Arcy places the AU mace

Before the degrees were conferred, there was a very special presentation to be made: the induction of Bernard Wiese to the Order of Athabasca University.



Parchments and hoods are ready for the graduands

gentlemen of the Governing Council, I present to you the petition that these graduands, having fulfilled all of the requirements of the statutes of Athabasca University, may, with your permission, be admitted to the degrees to which they are entitled."

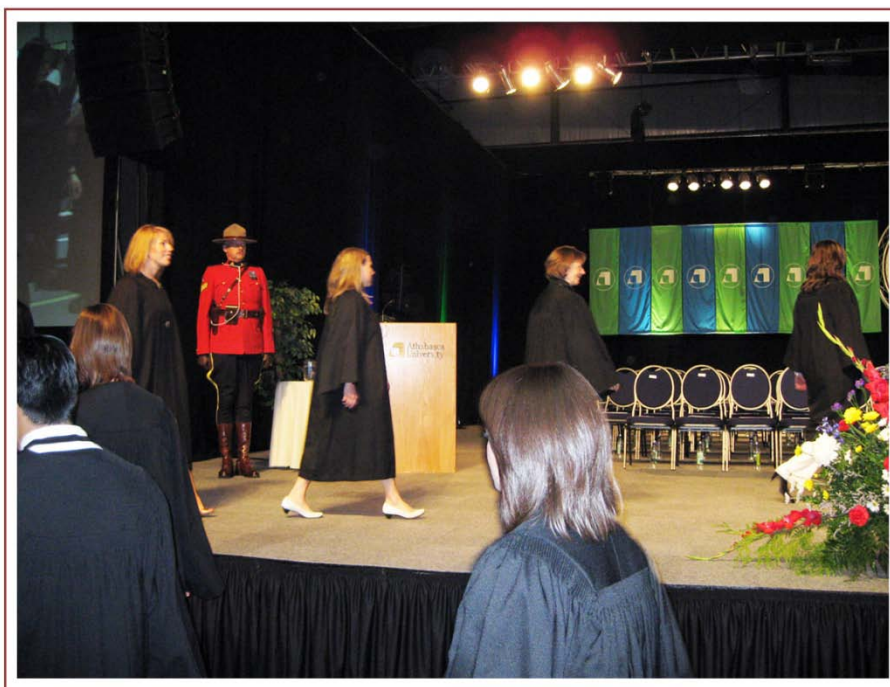
The Chair replied, the pledge was addressed to the graduands, and the presentation of degrees began. The first day of convocation saw the Master of Distance Education, Master of Arts - Integrated Studies, and Master of Counselling degrees awarded. The brief bios read during the ceremony offered a glimpse of each graduates' individual journey.

Some are members of the Canadian Forces; another ran her twenty-fifth marathon to celebrate the completion of her degree. One grad was wearing the same watch her grandmother wore at her graduation—in 1898. Some plan to begin more studies right away, while at least one can't wait to "rest her brains for a few months with reality TV."

On the career front, their plans include becoming an online instructor, a registered psychologist, and the continuation of a 32-year career with the RCMP.

For many years, Mr. Wiese has collected antique instruments, photos, and other artefacts from northern Alberta, especially from the Fort Chipewyan and Athabasca areas. In 2007, he made a gift of two major collections to the university, and the Order of Athabasca recognizes his valuable contribution.

Then came the moment that the graduands and their families had been working toward and anticipating for so long—the conferring of degrees. The candidates rose and the petition was read by Dr. Dietmar Kennepohl, Associate Vice-president (Academic): "Madam Chair, Mr. President and ladies and



The graduands take the stage



AU's Honorary Doctor of Laws is awarded to Dr. Jean Linse Pettifor (centre)

Another special presentation was made, this time the conferring of an honorary Doctor of Laws upon Dr. Jean Linse Pettifor. Dr. Pettifor was recognized for her "lifelong commitment to education and her mentoring, scholarship and leadership," and in her lively speech she celebrated the grads' combination of idealism and realism, and noted that by reaching for the stars, they'll make life better on earth.

The conferring of undergraduate degrees followed, and cameras flashed as grads in the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of General Studies (Applied Studies), Bachelor of General Studies (Arts and Science), and Bachelor of Professional Arts programs crossed the stage.

Along with their fellow grads in the master's programs, the diversity of their goals and accomplishments was inspiring. Their plans include working for CSIS, becoming a student advisor, and pursuing a 5th-degree black belt in tae kwon do. Some studied from exotic locations, while others were able to walk the trails at AU and visit the library while completing their degrees.

The final presentation of the day was the Governor General's Gold Medal to Marcel T. Ducharme, a graduate of the Master of Distance Education program. The Academic Medals were created in 1873 "to encourage academic excellence across the nation," and the gold medal is presented to students at the graduate level.

Marcel also delivered the graduate's address, and you can read the text of his speech in this issue of *The Voice*.

The Voice offers its warmest congratulations to the graduates of 2009!



Marcel Ducharme receives the Governor General's Gold Medal

Watch for more convocation coverage next week!

CONVOCATION 2009 – ADDRESS BY GRADUATE

Marcel Ducharme



During each of the three days of convocation, one graduate addressed his fellow students and convocation guests, sharing his thoughts about graduation and the journey that brought him there.

On Thursday, June 11, the graduate address was given by Marcel Ducharme, of Calgary, Alberta, who received his Master of Distance Education degree.

The Voice thanks Marcel for sharing the text of his address, which is printed below.

Madam Chair, Mr. President, distinguished guests, members of the platform party, graduates, families and friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I am both privileged and honoured today to stand before you to deliver the Graduate Address for the Athabasca University 2009 Convocation. When Mr. D'Arcy tried to contact me a few weeks ago I was out of town, so he asked my wife to relay a message for me to phone him as soon as possible (ASAP) although he wouldn't give her any details. So my wife sent me an

email with the subject title of ASAP with a big exclamation mark.

My immediate reaction upon seeing the email on my Blackberry was that something was wrong because it never fails, if something is going to go wrong it always happens when I'm away from home. However, after reading the message my reaction turned to curiosity, and then after speaking with Mr. D'Arcy it was amazement and excitement to think that I would be giving the graduate address at the Athabasca convocation ceremonies. The excitement I felt was shared by much of my family, which was notable from my wife's postings on Facebook and my mom's desire to call everyone.

In preparation for this address I spent a significant amount of time reflecting upon my educational journey at Athabasca. When thinking about the discourse I had with other students from across the globe over the last few years and my own personal experiences, there is no doubt that we've travelled a very challenging road in order to get to this milestone achievement today.

This reminded me of a comment made by Dr. Eastman on one of my courses last year after hearing about my training for the Boston Marathon in a welcome forum; to paraphrase him he said "a marathoner's commitment to train is pretty impressive, although to complete a degree by distance education, you also need to be a kind of marathoner."

Our coming together today for convocation is an opportunity to reflect back on the significant commitment we made to embark and continue on with this marathon educational journey; it is also an opportunity to examine the life experiences we had on the road we've travelled for the last number of years and how they have impacted upon us, and lastly an opportunity to contemplate how we see our future unfolding as we come to the end of this particular road in our lives.

For most of us I'm sure it does not seem all that long ago that we gathered the courage to apply for admission into Athabasca. After examining a number of university programs, there were three attributes that drew me to Athabasca. First was its dedication and excellent reputation for providing quality adult education; second, the flexibility of the programs would allow me to work at my own pace so I could balance my family, work, and community commitments with my studies; and third is Athabasca's innovation and application of technology to make learning accessible, especially as I was required to travel due to my job.

The demanding group project activities also provided an opportunity to work closely with our peers and to not only learn with them, but from them as well, as they freely shared with us their knowledge and diverse experiences.

Each of us had our own unique and individual life circumstances when considering a university; in the end one or more of the mentioned attributes or Athabasca's commitment to openness appealed to us in some way or we would not be sitting here today.

At the onset of our programs of study, I suspect that many of us were wondering what we had gotten ourselves into with the volume of required readings and learning activities. For me there was also the challenge of transitioning to the distance learning delivery methods, which was apparent by my initial apprehension on uploading my postings to the online

discussions, although I spent considerable time and effort in preparing them—after all, it was a permanent written record and open for debate over an extended period unlike my undergraduate days of fire and forget during traditional face-to-face discussions. Then there were our initial papers, which I well remember feeling some nervousness when preparing. Thankfully, we had the support and understanding of the faculty and our classmates to help navigate through these initial challenges.

During our time at Athabasca many relationships developed with fellow classmates, which brings to mind numerous fond memories of the online dialogue and group project work we experienced together. I think a key to the growth in these relationships was the supportive, collaborative, and open environment that was encouraged by our professors and respected by our peers. Many of these relationships began through online social forum introductions in our courses and then matured during the follow-on forums where classmates helped us to challenge our assumptions, values, and perspectives.

The demanding group project activities also provided an opportunity to work closely with our peers and to not only learn with them, but from them as well, as they freely shared with us their knowledge and diverse experiences. It was during these group projects that I found inspiration and comfort when hearing about the challenges others faced in balancing their studies with other commitments, some of which were similar to my own.

I well remember one group project where four of us compared our learning anytime/anywhere stories in relation to our kids' extracurricular activities, which ranged from early morning hockey practices to evening soccer games, and lots of other activities in between. In balancing such hectic schedules I'm sure most of us improved upon our time management skills and ability to persevere under what likely seemed the never-ending stresses of life's demands.

My reflection of the learning experiences at Athabasca University also brought to mind the role of the faculty and other staff on our educational journey. The faculty's supportive guidance and gentle pushes—or

potentially not so gentle—have been instrumental in helping us to achieve the success of getting here today. To the faculty, thank you for being that guide at our side and sharing in our learning experience.

The importance of the support staff at Athabasca also needs to be recognized for their role in helping make this university the exceptional educational institution that it is. To name a few, there is the staff in each of our programs who attended to our many phone and email enquiries, the library staff who mailed out all our course materials and the many reference books in support of our studies, and the helpdesk staff who provided us with technical support to keep us up and running whenever and wherever we were studying. A warm and sincere thank you to all these Athabasca staff and those others not specifically mentioned.

In looking back over the many learning experiences and challenges we've had while on our learning journey, much of this was shared with our family and friends. Their emotional support of listening to us talk about our latest readings and the challenges of our assignments, assuming additional family responsibilities so we could focus on our studies, and understanding the time demands of our studies were all key in helping us complete our programs. We should also recognize our family's tolerance as our books, notes, and other study materials infiltrated our homes, along with their patience as we monopolized the computer night after night. For all this we are truly thankful to our family and friends, and recognize we could not have travelled this road without their support.

To conclude, I would like to highlight that it has been through extensive hard work and determination we've reached our educational goals and come to the end of this particular road in our lives. It has truly been a marathon effort, but well worth it as we begin to see the many different roads now open to us. As we consider these various roads and move forward into another phase of our lives, be assured we are well prepared as we can draw upon what we've learned in our studies and the life experiences that have strengthened our character. I hope you all continue to challenge yourselves and use what you've learned to better your communities, our country, and in the words of Mahatma Gandhi "be the change you want to see in the world."

I would now ask that you join me in congratulating the Class of 2009!

DID YOU KNOW?



Open AU

Physical fitness, research projects, hockey, environmentally friendly cars: where can you find stories on all these topics and more? At [Open AU](#), Athabasca University's online publication that "features stories about our students, faculty, research, awards and events."

Along with fascinating feature stories, you can also find Alumni Profiles, Twitter feeds, and links to AU news. And if you're an AU student or graduate, you can also submit your own story for publication.

Whether you want to open an account and post comments, keep up on the latest news, or read about the latest titles from AU Press, Open AU is the place to be, so don't forget to add it to your favourites!

CONVOCATION 2009 – GRADUATE INTERVIEWS

Sandra Livingston



This is the first of a three-part *Voice* series featuring interviews with some of AU's 2009 graduates.

For many graduates, convocation weekend was the first time they had seen the beautiful grounds and buildings of the AU campus, and they attended the ceremonies from places near and far, including Barrie, Ontario, and Edmonton, Alberta.

The Voice would like to offer its sincere congratulations to all this year's graduates, and knows that their accomplishments will encourage all those students who are still completing their studies at AU.

Bethany Tynes

Bachelor of Arts, English

Bethany travelled from Edmonton, Alberta, to attend convocation, and you may already know her name: she's currently serving as an AUSU councillor.

Bethany graduated with a three-year concentration in English, and says that one of the most enjoyable things about studying at AU was the ability to learn at her own pace.

"That was a really huge benefit for me," says Bethany, "just because, with two kids, some days I don't open a book and some days I can read two or three novels in a day."

For those still in the program, Bethany's advice is to "just keep going when it looks bleak. Sometimes it's really hard to get motivated and actually open the books, but just keep going."

Bethany is already planning on more studies and is looking forward to starting AU's MAIS program in September. Although the MAIS program doesn't have a concentration in English, Bethany is hoping that plans for an English specialization come through.

First, though, Bethany and her family are heading off to spend the summer in Nova Scotia, so hopefully she'll have lots of time to relax before resuming her studies.

Congratulations, Bethany!



Tanvir Gill**Bachelor of Professional Arts, Criminal Justice**

For Tanvir, the most enjoyable part of the BPA program was the instructors. "They actually work in the field . . . so we got a better perspective of what the field was all about and what we can expect," he explains.

Tanvir completed a two-year diploma in corrections before beginning his BPA. He plans to go into policing, so having a retired police officer as a course instructor was a great benefit.

Tanvir travelled from Edmonton to attend convocation, and his advice for those thinking about the Criminal Justice program is to "talk to the professionals working in the field first, to get a better idea of what you're getting yourself into.

"Some people regret it after," he adds, "[because] it's not what they thought it would be. Research what it's all about."

Congratulations, Tanvir!

**Ana Meléndez-Rizo****Bachelor Professional Arts, Criminal Justice**

Ana began her Criminal Justice studies with the Investigations and Security Management program at Grant MacEwan, and travelled from Edmonton to attend the AU convocation ceremony.

For Ana, the most enjoyable part of her studies has been the opportunity to get to know fellow students, professors, and faculty.

Now that her BPA program is complete, Ana is looking forward to pursuing her law degree—and there's also a wedding in her future!

For those still in the program, Ana's advice is to "have fun with it. It's a huge experience. It's once in a lifetime that you're going to get an opportunity to get your degree. Study hard, because you'll definitely need the study time, but also have a work-life balance . . . once you balance everything together, then you'll have an absolutely successful experience."

Congratulations, Ana!



Tabitha Geraghty-Advocaat**Master of Distance Education**

Tabitha completed her Master of Distance Education in just under four years, and travelled from Richmond, BC, to attend convocation.

The support that students receive was one part of the AU experience that Tabitha especially enjoyed.

"Athabasca University understands what it's like to be taking education via distance, and the support is what gets you through."

While the support of all the staff was important, Tabitha had special words of praise for Glenda, the administrative assistant in the Centre for Distance Education.

"She's so wonderful," adds Tabitha. "[She] saw me through every stage of it."

After convocation, Tabitha would enjoy the opportunity to do some research on distance education and how it applies to Aboriginal people in their communities.

Congratulations, Tabitha!

**Cindy Knipelberg****Bachelor of Professional Arts, Criminal Justice**

Now that her BPA in Criminal Justice is complete, Cindy plans on a career in emergency management, a field that will see her dealing with natural and man-made disasters.

As part of her pre-BPA diploma, she enjoyed the opportunity of doing a three-month field placement with the RCMP.

For Cindy, the most enjoyable part of her AU experience was the courses that dealt with comparative criminal justice, examining police forces and other security agencies around the world.

"I got to learn about CSIS, Interpol. . . it's amazing to see how different cultures and different traditions form each police force, and how they deal with their crimes differently."

Along with her career plans, Cindy hopes to continue studying at AU. "I love the freedom, and I love the options of [saying] 'What do I want to learn this year?' It's a great experience. I'd recommend it for anyone."

Congratulations, Cindy!



CONVOCATION 2009 – PHOTO ALBUM



Welcome to Convocation 2009



Don't forget the gowns!

Awaiting the
graduands

The joyful sounds of Kokopelli



Flowers adorn the grounds

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Greg Herriges

Greg Herriges is a Minnesota-based composer and player of many world instruments who brings together a wide range of musical traditions to create imaginative, stirring musical pieces. His recently released album Telluric Currents is an exquisite tapestry of exotic sound (read Voice review [here](#)).

Recently Greg spoke with Wanda Waterman St. Louis.

"Imagine All Things as an Expression of Universal Imagination . . ."

The song "True Smile" is about finding true human connections between cultures and that was something that I always kind of struggled with. For most of my life I've been kind of an isolated person, very solitary, and the true human connection that I finally started finding came from immigrants and people from other places.

This tune came to me during a trip home from Buenos Aires where I had attended a guitar seminar. I found there was such a differences in the smiles between the people I had met down there and the people in the northern-western hemisphere. The smiles of the people down there were much more sincere. It might have something to do with the economic situation of the people down there. They were without many resources and so appreciated what they had in life. Interactions like that helped me appreciate the things I have and the things around me.

Telluric Currents

I was a big fan of Umberto Eco. I read *Foucault's Pendulum*, which kind of dealt with a conspiracy to harness the telluric currents, the currents that run underneath the earth's surface. It was an appropriate name for this project because the natural currents underneath the surface of the earth run in a pattern that is hard to harness; they're somewhat random, scientifically. It seemed like a good name for the ensemble I was putting together and the CD that came out of it. It carries the idea that we're picking up on currents from all sorts of distant places.

How it Began

In my early musical training I was self-taught. There was very little structure and discipline in what I was learning, outside of myself. I was self-motivated and self-disciplined to teach myself guitar and various other things.

But after playing music for a long time and playing a lot of progressive rock and things like that I ended up studying ethnomusicology at the University of Minnesota. That wasn't so much applied music as the study of music and musical sources—musical anthropology, sort of. So I took that and applied it to the music I was making. From there I started working with musicians from different places, learning from them as I went along.

Bollywood

I listen to all sorts of Indian music, not just classical. I love and am heavily influenced by Bollywood music. From a Western perspective it breaks all the rules. It's like early world fusion.

Pooja Goswami and A. Pavan

I met Pavan while working with the Indian Music Society of Minnesota. I was a fanatic about the concerts that they were holding locally and Pavan was one of the directors of that group and also a great tabla player who had studied with all sorts of tabla masters. I hooked up with him and he hooked me up with Pooja.

I had seen Pooja Goswami perform a long time ago in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and I thought, "This is somebody I would love to work with sometime in the future." It came around full circle eventually when Pavan became associated with her and eventually married her.

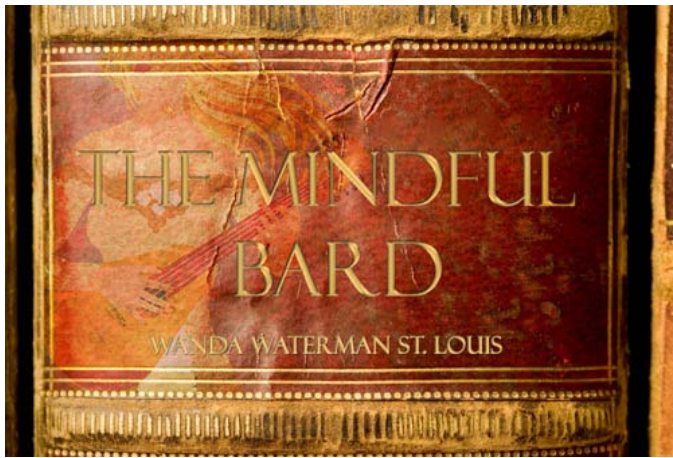
I also write guitar instruction books for Hal Leonard but I'm going to have to put all that on hold for a while because I just got a composer fellowship; I'll have to concentrate on making music. The fellowship came from the Bush Foundation, which is kind of a philanthropic foundation set up by one of the founders of 3M. With that money I'm tentatively planning to start a project called *Sympathetic Strings*,

bringing together string traditions from different places. I'm hoping to bring together a Chinese pipa player and a South Indian veena player. They're people I've worked with a little bit but we all have a desire to work together more, to explore the possibilities.

The Power of Consciousness

I'm not of one particular religion necessarily but I do believe in the idea that consciousness can create matter or reality, the way that it relates to quantum physics and the way that visualization can make things come true for you as an individual but also for people as communities or societies.





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

CD: Greg Herriges, *Telluric Currents*

Label: New Folk Records

Release date: 2009

World/Folk/Ambient

Poet Who Stands at the Place Where the Streams of Vibration Converge

"Imagine all things/ As an expression / Of universal / Imagination /

Sending out a true smile / To the ones who'll see it / Throwing out a true kiss / Hoping you receive it"

Greg Herriges, from "True Smile," *Telluric Currents*

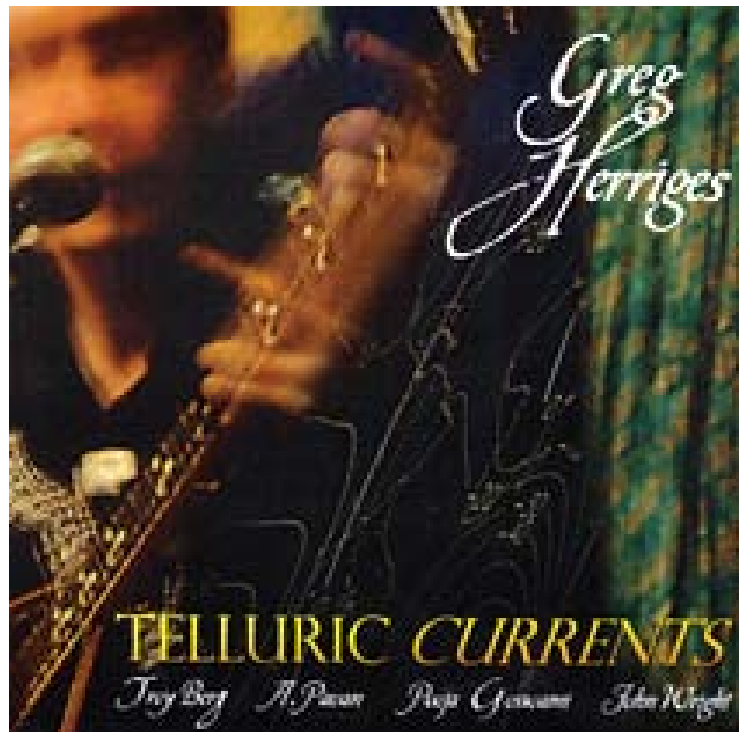
Inside the liner notes of this CD is a world map of telluric currents, the natural electrical currents flowing beneath the earth's surface. They appear to meander in wide, unimpeded arcs beneath oceans and land masses. For Greg Herriges, telluric currents with their movements and convergences symbolize the linking of disparate musical traditions, which, brought under Herriges's sensitive artistic direction, turn out to be not quite so dissimilar after all.

In the haunting "Kap Khun," the Indian classical songstress Pooja Goswami delivers a Hindi love song with a non-occidental melody line, sung over a Western key (played on guitar), and yet the two musical lines resolve together in a chord that is achingly beautiful.

"True Smile," a song George Harrison would have been proud to have written, is a deeply meaningful idea expressed in words you'd never imagine being able to make into a song.

"Pipeline" is a vintage surfer tune played by an acoustic guitar master, complete with harmonics, vamps, tremolos, and rapid runs.

Greg Herriges is a musical syncretist. An ethnomusicologist who has lived most of his life in Minnesota, he's fished his musical inspiration from Bollywood movies, Japan, Persia, India, Turkey, and surfer rock. He's managed to surround himself with excellent musicians of many cultures and I'm guessing that it's not only his artistic prowess but also his obvious respect for their traditions that has made collaboration with him so desirable.



One issue often voiced against musical syncretism is the belief that one should only play the music from one's own ethnic background, that playing the music of other cultures is not only exploitative, it's also artificial; you cannot, it's assumed, play a style of music unless you have lived through the particular pain of that music's inventors.

If you take this fallacy to its outer limits, you would have to insist that Wynton Marsalis should not be playing Bach and Handel because he's not German. Would you? And would anyone have dared tell Odetta, who recorded some of the most beautiful versions of Irish songs I've ever heard, that she had no right to sing Irish songs because she wasn't Irish herself?

Such a view neglects to acknowledge that every musical tradition ever created has been to some extent a joining of diverse musical elements to bring about something entirely new.

Fact is, the best musicians and composers are gifted with an empathy that peers into other cultures and allows them to recognize themselves in them. Those who develop this empathy can aspire to create a work as enchanting as *Telluric Currents*.

Telluric Currents manifests seven of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it makes me want to be a better artist; 3) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it is about attainment of the true self; 6) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 7) 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. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Pet Shop

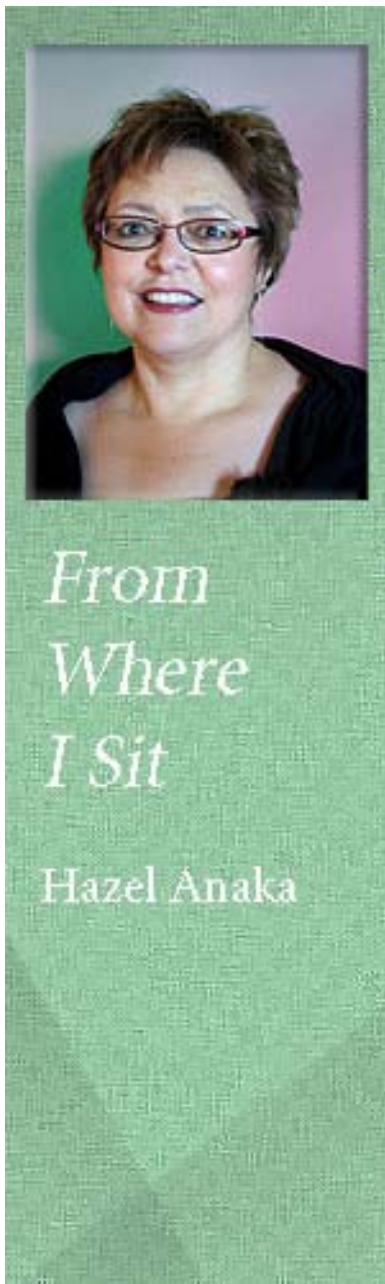
Dog days aren't just for summer anymore. The worldwide pet market is valued at around \$4 billion dollars, and it's no exaggeration to say that some pets are treated like royalty. From dog hotels to airlines just for Fluffy, here's a look at some of the ways people indulge their furry companions.

Pampered Pets - Dog yoga, anyone? Or, if your four-legged friend is a little more adventurous, you can always sign him up for surfing lessons on California's Coronado Bay. Afterwards, you can throw a birthday party, a "Bark Mitzvah," or even a pet wedding.

Pet Massage - Whether your pet has health problems or you just want to pamper her a little, this interesting video offers some basic pet massage techniques from a certified animal massage practitioner.

Pet Pampering Gone Wild - This *Newsweek* feature demonstrates just how far some people will go to pamper their pets. There's the CatCam, a device that gives owners a collar-eye view of their cat's wanderings, the Puppoose (carry your dog like a purse), and plenty of other ways to spoil Fido.

Haute Dog Easter Parade - Each spring, Long Beach, California, hosts the Haute Dog Easter Parade. Dogs in Easter bonnets, dogs dressed in bunny costumes, and dogs nestled in baskets of Easter eggs: if the mere thought already has you saying "Aww!," this slideshow is for you.



My Intention

A few short hours ago our daughter took off to Tokyo for eight days. As with any mother this draws out conflicting emotions: pride because she's so worldly at 23; excitement because it's sure to be a great adventure for her; terror because my baby girl is flying halfway around the world and I can't protect her. To be honest, it didn't help that she announced her plans the day the Air France flight disappeared into the Atlantic. I guess a seat sale was too good to pass up, so now she and two friends are off.

Several months ago when I was dealing with a sudden job loss Hilary had offered her place to me to use as a retreat site while she was at work each day. I was moved by the gesture. It told me she understands that when I'm feeling—you fill in the blank—what I most need is time, space, and silence to come to grips with whatever "it" is. She knows I retreat into books and my thoughts to make sense of things, to help with decision making, to regroup, to establish an action plan. And while I sorely needed to do all that in March I graciously declined her offer.

Now I'm taking her up on it. I will house-sit for her and do a self-directed retreat for me. It won't be my first time and I'm looking forward to recreating the environment for introspection, catharsis, insight, and renewal. I know that's a tall order for just a few days but it boils down to intention and being open to going where the process takes you.

My first retreat, eight years ago, was a two-day, silent, self-directed one done at a religious centre. I saw and spoke to no one during my time there. My meals magically appeared in a common kitchen area. There was no television, radio, or telephone. The setting was serene and reverential; my room was feminine and comfortable. Last year I did a week-long retreat at a rustic resort in Manitoba. That was more accidental in the sense that it was to be a getaway for two. At the last minute Roy couldn't go, so the focus turned inward and personal. It too was a wonderful experience.

Since I made my decision to do this I've been slowly assembling those books and other supplies I will need to make this retreat memorable. I'll be taking my laptop, a journal, coloured pens, camera, and my walking shoes. Also in the rolling suitcase that we dropped off yesterday is Jennifer Loudon's *The Woman's Retreat Book*, because that's where it all first began for me.

But I will need to guard against using these days in Edmonton to run errands, connect with friends, shop, or otherwise be distracted. But I'm also trusting the wiser, more mellow Hazel to recognize that retreat rules are written on the heart, not stone tablets, and that I will do exactly what I'm supposed to do over the next few days. That is my intention, from where I sit.

The Interviewer

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

written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Rockhead # 28: Number 10 Spring Garden Road



They try to guess which passengers are the assholes.



It's the metalheads.

Nah. It's those rednecks.

It turns out to be just a couple of nondescript high school kids.



When Gord gets on the bus they move forward, snickering, sit behind him, and grab his hat.



Reuben gets up and walks to the front of the bus.



Gord suddenly sees him.



next: Yer in My Seat



My values are family values!



*Dear
Barb*

Barbara Godin

Student Must Consider Parenthood Options

Dear Barb:

I am an 18-year-old college student and I have just learned I am pregnant. My boyfriend is also 18 years old and in college. He is very supportive, but we both realize we are not ready for marriage, let alone parenthood. My parents feel I should have the baby and put it up for adoption. My boyfriend feels I should consider abortion. I don't know what to do. I just know we are not in a position to raise a child at this point in our lives. What should I do?

Kim

Hi, Kim. As you know, there is no easy answer to your situation. You and your boyfriend have to carefully weigh all your options.

If you choose to have the baby and give it up for adoption the pregnancy will present a considerable disruption to your life. You may have to take leave from school and you will have to deal with questions from others, who may or may not have an opinion about your decision. Also, as your pregnancy progresses and you feel the life within you, you may question whether you are really able to give this baby up for adoption. When the day comes to say goodbye to your baby it will be

extremely difficult for both you and your boyfriend as well as other family members.

On the other hand, if you decide to have an abortion you will have a completely different set of problems. You will have minimal disruption to your life in terms of your school year, as it will continue uninterrupted for the most part. Whom you choose to tell of your decision will be entirely up to you. However, as you probably know there are a lot of strong feelings associated with abortion. Right-to-life groups are constantly spreading the word that abortion is wrong. Before making a decision to get an abortion I would suggest you discuss it with a professional counsellor. As well, if you have strong religious ties discuss your decision with one of your faith leaders, such as your minister or pastor.

If you make the choice to give your baby up for adoption you may be able to find some comfort in the fact that you have brought joy to someone who was not able to have children of their own. However, you will have to live with the knowledge that you have a child somewhere in this world. For the rest of your life you will remember their birthday and wonder how they are doing. One day you may have an opportunity to meet this child.

If you choose abortion you have to make peace within yourself and believe that you are making the best decision for all concerned.

It is a difficult situation and I don't know that I have been able to make it any easier for you. My advice is always to follow your heart. Good luck, Kim.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

AUSU THIS MONTH



Annual AGM Held

As you probably already know from the AGM Report put out by the *Voice*, AUSU held its annual general meeting on March 23, 2009.

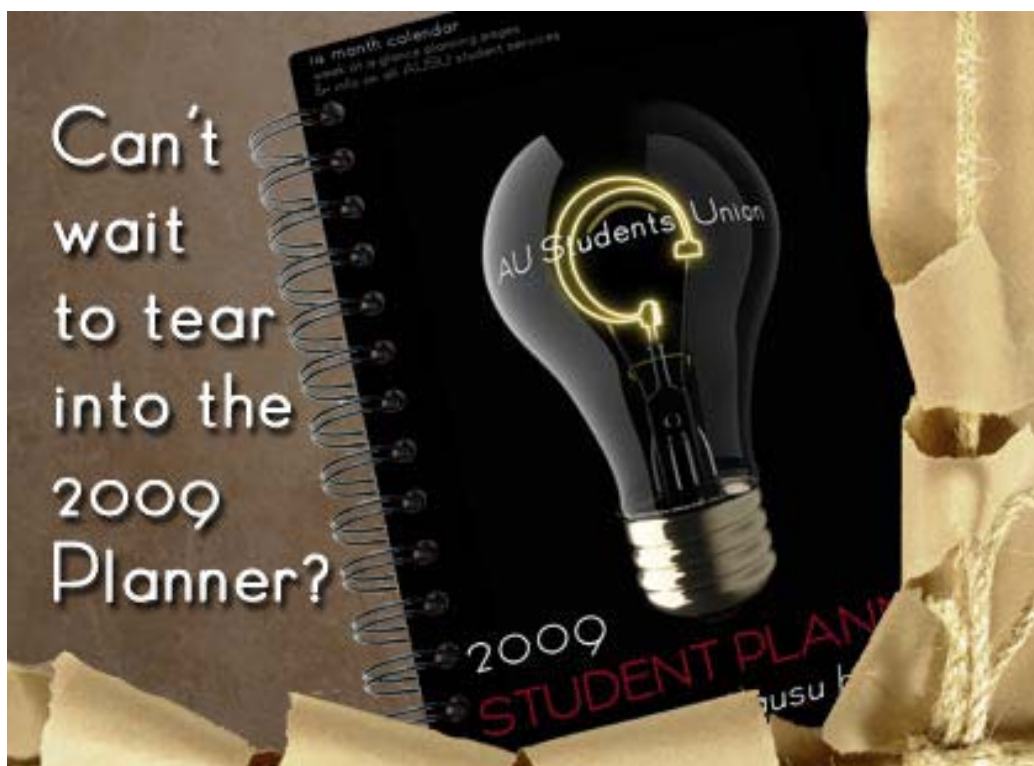
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member even during a term that doesn't have any AUSU courses scheduled.

Also, our fees were changed from being \$8, \$16, or \$24 per course depending on the number of credits, to being a flat \$3 per credit, an increase of a dollar per course for most students. With this extra money, AUSU should be able to begin moving forward with a lot of desired programs that have been held up due to our staffing not being as big as our ambitions.

Also at the AGM, some good discussion was held with respect to email accounts, an issue we know a lot of you are concerned about, and we'll keep working with the university to see if a reasonable solution can be found among all of the priority issues AU needs to deal with.

Media Committee Started

Council has approved the terms of reference for the new media committee. This group, including your *Voice* editor, will be working hard to deliver new multimedia content to you on a regular basis. Our hope is to bring forward a more engaging, interactive AUSU, one that can help you get everything you want out of your education.



AU Fees Increasing

On March 27, the AUGC approved the new fees that will come into effect in September 2009. The bottom line is you'll be paying an additional \$29 per 3-credit course, including the increase to the AUSU fees. This includes an \$18 increase to base tuition and a \$10 increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU has noted

concerns with the university continuing to increase fees by the maximum allowable by Alberta legislation, but has agreed that lower quality service is not a viable alternative.

More concerning is the increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU will continue to press for details on how this fee relates to the prices the university has to pay for your textbooks and online materials.

au.world Closes

AUSU has noted the closing of the au.world publication with sadness, and has brought this to the governing council of AU. In its place, AU has begun a new magazine called *AU Open* which, rather than being strictly student focussed, contains a mix of stories for alumni, investors, and students. We have strong hopes that AU will increase the focus of this new magazine to be at least as relevant to current students as the old au.world was.

2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

Members are snapping up our 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planner. Now in full colour, it has more course tracking pages, brief guides to the citation styles you'll need for your essays at AU, and of course, all the important AU dates and addresses that you need to know. You can order your own copy by going to <http://www.ausu.org/handbook/index.php>



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.

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.

In addition, we have recently purchased some steel water bottles. With all the concerns about BPA in clear plastic, the decision was made to go stainless steel. Cheaper and more environmentally friendly than purchasing plastic bottles of water, fill up your AUSU bottle to keep thirst away no matter where you're travelling.

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.

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: Bilingual grads needed for government jobs

Canada's job markets may not be booming, but bilingual grads have an advantage in at least one sector: the federal government. According to a parliamentary committee report, falling rates of bilingualism will create a shortage of federal employees.

As Canada's largest employer, the federal government expects to hire "between 12,000 and 15,000 new employees each year to replace retiring public servants," according to the [CBC](#).

That number is "larger than General Motors' entire Canadian workforce in 2008." As many as 6,000 of those federal jobs are designated bilingual, "including all senior management positions."

Even as the need for bilingual employees grows, the percentage of young adults who can speak both official languages has been falling for the past 15 years. The report attributes this decline to a lack of "language competency requirements for admission or graduation," requirements that

have been dropped by post-secondary institutions.

Although the government cannot mandate changes to colleges and universities, the report does contain 11 recommendations, including teacher training, student mobility, and "federal support for immersion programs."

In Foreign News: Patent system dismantled in Venezuela

According to [El Universal](#), the government of Venezuela is dismantling that country's patent system, making patent information publicly available so that anyone will be able to "make use of it." The "technical information" contained in licensed patents will be posted on the Internet, on the website of the Autonomous Service for Intellectual Property (SAPI).

The official reasoning behind the move is that it will "eliminate the exclusion created by the patent systems." As President Hugo Chávez told listeners on a radio show, "patents cannot be a restriction or a trap." The change is intended to allow Venezuelan technicians to take existing developments and improve on them.

Others, however, believe that eliminating the patent system will put a chill on new research and development. One lawyer specializing in industrial property called the decision a "coup d'état," saying it violates constitutional rights. Another concern is that the decision will have a stifling effect on the economy, with those in manufacturing and development leaving the country in order to protect their investment in intellectual property.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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