

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 39  
October 16, 2009

## Patrick Brealey

Jazz and songbirds

## Taking Root

Road to freedom

## AU Options

Human Services BPA

*Plus:*

*Sister Aurora, Dear Barb,*

*From Where I Sit, and much more...*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



## ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



## Down on the Farm

There's no question that our federal government is busy these days. In fact, it seems they're so busy they haven't heard all the noise being made about the increasing viability of the local-food movement.

How else to explain the fact that the government is adamantly refusing to listen to logic and is determined to shut down the six farms located in minimum-security prisons across the country?

The physical, emotional, and social benefits of such programs are well documented. Fresh air, exercise, the ability to reconnect with and nurture other living things; all contribute to improved mental and physical well-being. As one inmate told the [CBC](#), the farm experience has "reawakened his emotions, letting him feel human again."

And the benefits go well beyond those for individuals. As a recent Eastern Ontario AgriNews article says, a prison farm in the Kingston area "ranks in the top 20 per cent of Ontario's dairy herds for management." The farm supplies 150 local butcher shops, donates produce to "food banks across the province," and supplies eggs and milk to other Corrections Canada facilities in Ontario and Quebec.

The six prisons cost a total of \$4 million annually to run and the government thinks that's too high a price for the immense dividends the farms pay for society.

But their main argument is the one that makes the least sense. In February, Corrections Canada spokesperson Christa McGregor told reporters that what inmates really need are skills that will prepare them for their eventual entry into the workplace.

"Employment-related skills are major factors in an offender's ability to pursue a crime-free life," McGregor said.

And what's a key sector in that workplace? According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, it's farming. "Canadian agricultural producers are the backbone of a highly competitive sector worth \$130 billion a year," the agency's website says.

Not just industrial farming, either. As the Agriculture Canada website goes on to say, "there are [a] number of emerging local food systems initiatives in Canada," and consumers are becoming increasingly aware of "the benefits of 'buying local' in Canada." And based on a 2006 Ipsos Reid survey, Canadians believe locally grown food "is superior to food originating from conventional methods of production."

It's a trend that's spreading. The word "locavore" is appearing more often in popular media and *The 100-Mile Diet* is a Canadian success story. The international Slow Food movement, 85,000 members strong and growing, "supports a new model of agriculture, which is less intensive and healthier, founded on the knowledge and know-how of local communities."

The prison farm program offers remarkable opportunities for growth, both to inmates and to society at large. It would be a shame for the government to cut that off at the roots.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



## Patrick Brealey

*Patrick Brealey is a Toronto-based singer-songwriter whose fountainheads of musical inspiration include bluegrass, blues, and country music. Mercury in Songbirds, his latest album with The Knives on the Boompa label, is a set of roots-influenced songs laced with irony and dark humour while managing to be fun to listen to. At his shows he invites fans to savour his own homemade pickles and preserves.*

*Recently Patrick took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about himself and his music.*

## Beginnings

I grew up in the foggy forest of North Vancouver. I started on the saxophone when I was 11 and then went on to piano. I wasn't particularly good at either. By the time I was 16 I was a little tired of playing classical music and stopped taking lessons. Then for some reason I ended up playing every day, which was better in a way because I ended up getting a little bit scattered in terms of my learning curve.

I ended up taking lessons in jazz piano later on. When I stopped taking those lessons and branched off on my own again I ended up playing some country but mainly jazz. I had a band of my own in high school and sort of picked up guitar along the way.

## The Cream Always Rises

Writing music in roots styles is becoming so popular that where it started and what it evolved into are two different things. It started with western swing and bluegrass and eventually turned into country music, which was frowned on for a while (perhaps by the disco set). It's taken a lot of twists and turns. Now country music has some really great songs by some really great artists; the cream sort of rises to the top.

## The Best Medicine

I definitely love to laugh but I don't want to be Weird Al. I guess there's a difference between being overtly jokey and using the darker side of humour. I would rather people enjoyed listening to the song, and if they choose to look deeper into the lyrics, great, but I don't want the music suffering for the lyrics.

## On Songwriting

Being busy helps me to be more creative. It often takes me a while to write music. If I write a song about breakups I usually write it long after this has occurred. I don't know if there are conditions. Usually a spark comes when I'm doing something else. Not too many of my songs are autobiographical.

You do have to deal with grieving even though you don't want to.



## Musical Directions

I've been delving into bluegrass a bit. Bluegrass is a relatively new thing for me to be listening to but a couple of the guys I play with are really deep into it. There's such a breadth of it even though everybody admits that all the songs kind of sound the same. It's a genre that has a distinct feel and sound.

## On Books

In *Bob Dylan Chronicles*, his autobiography, he talks very plainly about his experiences, not only as a personality but also as a musician. He didn't ever really want to front any causes. At one point in '66 or '67 he moved to Woodstock, New York.

He had people pounding on his door wanting him to come and lead the charge and he was recovering from an accident and just wanted to raise his family. He just wanted to be a person.

I read when I'm travelling. I remember reading *A Hundred Years of Solitude* while travelling through Europe and I wonder if the book would have meant the same to me had I been reading it at home. But there was a whimsical sense to the book and when you're travelling you have that sense of whimsy anyway.



## AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



### Bachelor of Professional Arts, Human Services Major

Athabasca University's Bachelor of Professional Arts with a major in Human Services is a degree designed to aid those practicing in human services-related careers to combine their practical experience and previous college education with advanced skills and knowledge.

Emily Dukeshire is a Human Services program student nearing the completion of her degree. She has "really enjoyed the program" and "found the tutors and staff in the program very helpful."

Dukeshire works as a recreation therapist, and found the Bachelor of Professional Arts a very attractive option as it allowed her to apply her college diploma for credit toward her degree.

Dukeshire loves that the program directly applies to her job. "Many of the things I have learned in the program have helped me in my job and my work with clients," she says.

Dr. Jane Arscott, academic coordinator of the Human Services program, agrees that this applicability is one of the degree's greatest strengths. "The human services program receives kudos from its graduates for enabling students to make use of learning on the job in their universities studies. Students have the opportunity to apply examples from life experiences as filtered through the theoretical materials supplied in the coursework to achieve a deeper understanding of themselves as professionals."

And completing a Bachelor of Professional Arts in Human Services can open the doors for these professionals to continue on to further studies in the future. Many students "go on to post-degree programs in education and master's degrees in counselling, the Arts and distance education," Arscott says. "They bring to their future studies the perspective of a skilled and knowledgeable practitioner."

Dukeshire has yet to decide what she wants to do once she finishes her degree, but further studies are definitely something she's considering. "That still feels a little ways away," though, she says. At this point, she's thinking about trying either a Master of Arts - Integrated Studies or a Master of Counselling through AU, or possibly a Master of Social Work through the University of Calgary.

"I also really enjoy the work I do as a recreation therapist," she says, "and may just continue there for a little while until I decide which route I want to take."

But while Dukeshire likes that she has so many options after graduation, one aspect of the program that she feels is a weakness is the isolation of learning by distance. "It would be nice if students had a way to connect."

Dr. Arscott says, however, that this weakness will soon be corrected. "The first of the Human Services

courses is going online in November, and this will provide an opportunity to meet other students in the program and . . . get to know other students.” Faculty in the program are “excited about connecting students to one another because of the added dimension it will bring to their learning.”

Dr. Arscott also explains that the program recently completed a review “and is looking forward to strengthening the specifically human services content of the program in the future.”

For anyone who’s been out of schooling for a few years since gaining their college diploma, “getting back into good study habits can be daunting,” she says. But “most often it matters very little how successful a student was in [the] past . . . . Beginning with Human Services courses to fit with the student’s interests, developing a program plan in consultation with an adviser, setting realistic goals and working steadily toward them has worked well for most of our graduates.”

## **CLICK OF THE WRIST – One Person’s Junk**

One person’s junk is another person’s treasure. That saying has been taken to heart by these creative individuals, who have turned discarded items into works of art—and even places to live. This week, it’s all about seeing the potential in somebody else’s trash.

### **Junk Sculptures**

Leo Sewell collects odds and ends from rubbish dumps around his native Philadelphia, but what he turns them into is far from trash. His artworks have been featured on kids’ TV shows and in museums, and Hollywood stars have even been known to snap them up.

### **Garbage Warrior**

Michael Reynolds is an architect but the homes he creates are far from typical. Instead, he transforms garbage into “‘earthships’—eco-friendly homes with surprisingly pleasing aesthetics and tiny (or nonexistent) power bills.”

### **Phoenix Commotion**

Some people might say it’s impossible to meet modern building codes using “materials [that] are salvaged from other construction projects, hauled out of trash heaps or just picked up from the side of the road.” They’ve probably never met Dan Phillips, who does exactly that with his Texas construction company, Phoenix Commotion.

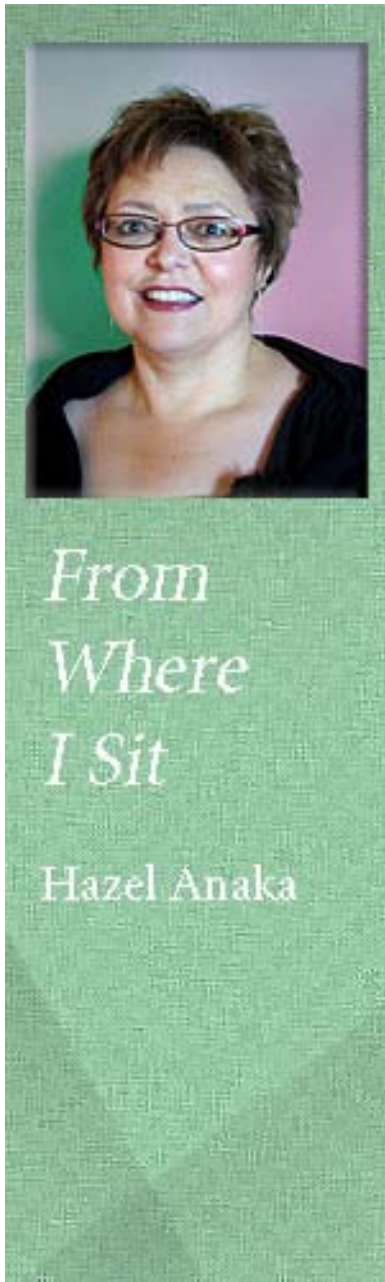
### **Smart Art Competition**

The Smart Art Competition invites artists to get creative with discarded materials. From suitcases converted into speaker boxes, to a gown made of cast-off Crown Royal liquor bags, this slide show reveals just how fine the line is between what’s considered art and trash.

### **Cigarette Butts into Clothing**

Clothing made of used cigarette butts? It might sound like a crazy idea, but Chilean designer Alexandra Guerrero has turned it into reality through the Mantis Project. After being cleaned, rinsed, and dried, the butts are shredded “to create a wool-like material.” With some 4.3 trillion cigarette butts discarded every year, it might not be such a crazy idea after all.





## Enough Already

All of us have jumped to conclusions at one time or another. If we were lucky, no one found out and we could sheepishly and privately promise not to be such a schmuck ever again. Until next time.

In politics, leaping before looking happens as often as the sun rises. Much political hay is to be made. If a drive-by smear campaign scores, yippee. Off with their heads is the tired refrain. Yet the daily dance of grandstanding is a turnoff for most.

I am amused and chagrined that within the space of about a week three such attacks on the government appear to have misfired. What confuses me is why the Tories didn't set the record straight sooner or release the information that would have given a more balanced look at the issue and in the process averted some of the bad press. But hey, I'm not a tactician or political guru so I'm left wondering.

There was the case of Suaad Mohamud, detained in Kenya for three months because she didn't look like her passport photo. After DNA tests she was expedited back to Canada, where she has launched a 2.5 million dollar lawsuit against the government. Only now do we know that she was "vague and evasive" during three separate interviews. She didn't know the full name of her employer, couldn't describe her job, missed the date of her marriage by a decade, and didn't know her son's birthday. And she was seven centimetres shorter than her stated height! Vigilant officials believe the woman's younger sister may have been trying to sneak into Canada. In the meantime, Bob Rae insisted the government "settle with her."

Much ado was also made about the one hundred body bags sent to a Manitoba reserve by Health Canada in the lead up to the expected onslaught of H1N1 this fall. Accusations of racism and insensitivity were heaped upon the minister and her department. Calls for inquiries and investigations were made. Grand Chief David Harper called for resignations. Let's shoot first and ask questions later, why don't we. In an October 7 news conference the

minister stated that the reserve's nurse in charge had placed the order. Shouldn't/couldn't the person in question have cleared this mess up the day this hit the fan instead of a month of finger pointing, investigating, and straining an already tenuous relationship? But far be it from me to jump to any conclusions about motivation or rationale.

At the time of this writing the government seems to have quietly been working on the Omar Khadr fiasco since 2006. A sound bite on the six o'clock news is all I know so far. How many gallons of ink and feet of film have been invested in this issue and calls for government action?

I'm sick of the moral outrage, the wringing of hands, and the witch hunt for someone to take the fall for every bloody little thing that upsets someone. Every issue has two sides; nothing is black or white, good or bad. When did assuming the worst become a national pastime? It's enough already, from where I sit.

# Sister Aurora

*There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .*



*Than live on  
crackers?*

*Than marry Shane.*



*Oh, yeah!*

*Best hockey  
player in the  
county,  
good looks,  
top grades,  
dad's a  
millionaire.*

*Where do we start the  
bidding?*





*Dear  
Barb*

*Barbara Godin*

## Family Must Seek Professional Help for Addict

*Dear Barb:*

*My older sister got married three years ago. They were very happy until Keith injured his back at work. He went through months of physiotherapy and nothing seemed to help the excruciating pain he was experiencing. Ultimately his doctor prescribed pain killers. He was put on a variety of different medications until his doctor settled on oxycodone. It has been six months since Keith began taking oxycodone and he is a like a completely different person.*

*He lays around the house all day and does nothing. He is miserable and verbally abusive to my sister. Keith doesn't help with the housework or cooking, even though my sister works full-time. I have heard about other people who get on this drug and become addicted and I believe Keith is addicted. I feel sorry for my sister—she loves her husband and doesn't know how to help him. Is there anything we can do as a family to help them? I am afraid my sister will get fed up and leave her marriage. Hope you can help us.*

*Wendy*

Hi, Wendy. What a difficult situation. I have heard similar stories from friends and family members who have experienced loved ones who are in the same condition as your sister and brother-in-law. From your question I can certainly see what a caring and loving family you have.

Oxycodone is a highly addictive narcotic that is ruining families and relationships. I personally cannot understand why doctors are prescribing this drug unless it is absolutely necessary; even then its use should be closely monitored.

Have you tried to talk to your brother-in-law about this problem? Is he able to recognize that he may be addicted? If he does admit to this, then he has taken the first step to recovery. If not, it will be very difficult to get him to agree to any kind of treatment.

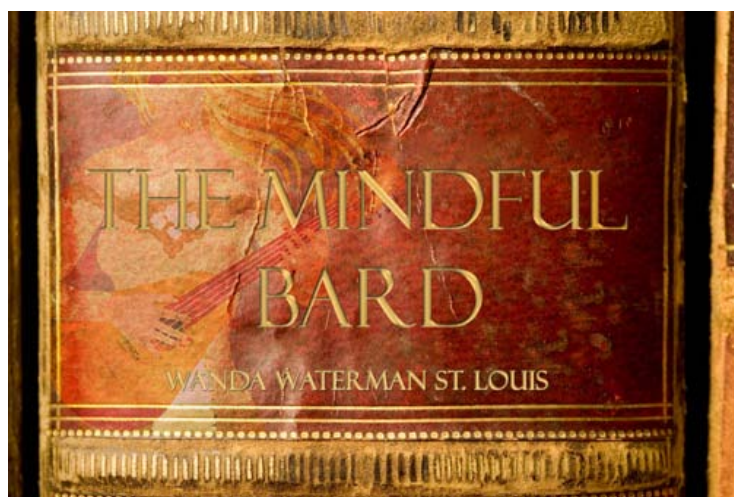
There are several treatment programs specifically designed to help individuals get off oxycodone. Some are more successful than others. Your family doctor would be the person to help in directing you to the best treatment option for your brother-in-law.

As well, there is an abundance of information available online that shows where the nearest treatment centres are located. I am sure if you contact them they will have strategies that you can utilize to assist you and your family to get your brother-in-law into treatment.

In the meantime, continue to support your sister and encourage her to get herself some professional help to deal with this heart-wrenching situation.

Sorry I couldn't be more helpful, but this is a situation that needs professional guidance. Thanks, Wendy.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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.*



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

DVD: *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*

Release date: 2008, documentary

Directed by Lisa Merton and Alan Dater

Planting Trees Down Both Sides of the Muddy Road to Freedom

*"If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer. But if he spends his days as*

*a speculator, shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is deemed an industrious and enterprising citizen."*

Henry David Thoreau

*"The movement started as a tree-planting campaign. That's how we entered into communities. But it is a little more than just the planting of trees—it's the planting of ideas. It's giving them reason to stand for their rights, to protect their environmental rights, and giving them reasons why they should protect their women's rights."*

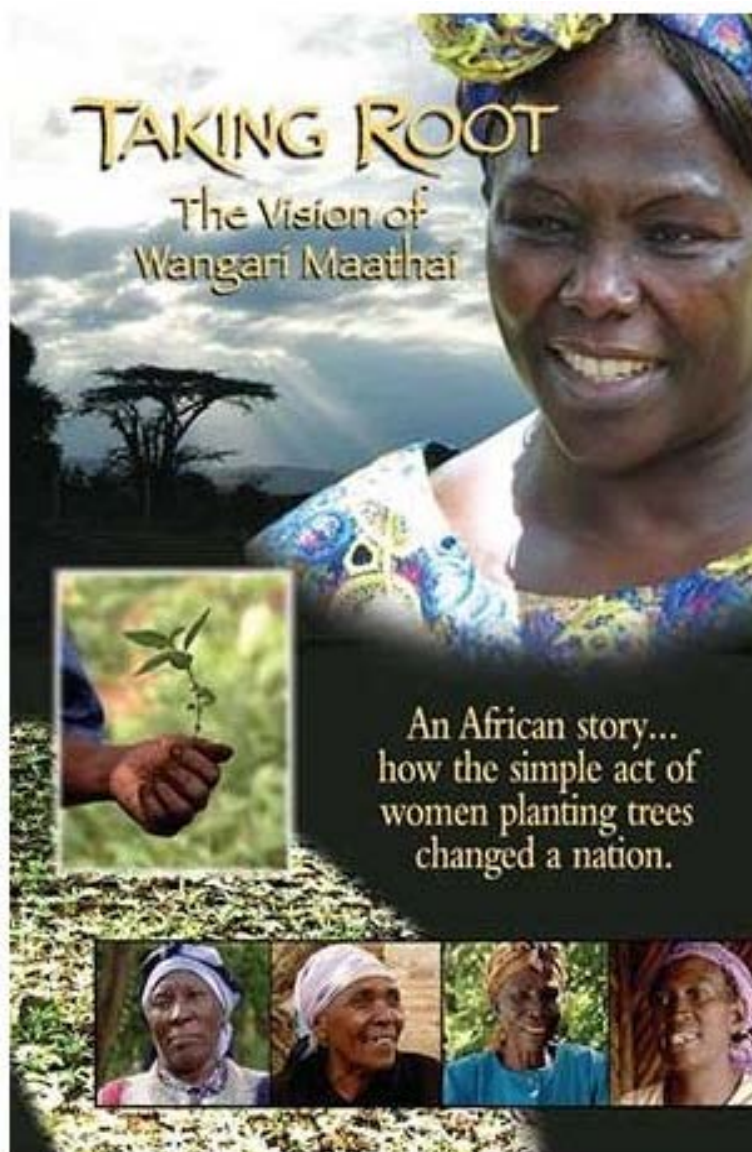
Wangari Maathai

*Taking Root* begins with the rainbowed, sun-dappled scene of a wading girl trying to hand-scoop frog eggs from a sparkling spring.

This girl will grow up to win the Nobel Prize, but right now she thinks the frog eggs are glass beads; she wants to wear them around her neck.

Above her head are the snaking branches of an old fig tree. She is not to gather firewood from this tree, her mother says, because it is a tree of God.

Halfway through this girl's life the frog eggs disappear from the spring. God's house is now the church and the fig tree is cut down. The spring dries up. The forest is cleared. The





villagers no longer use their land to grow their own food; they've acquiesced to the government—and to recent colonial history—by using every inch of acreage for the more lucrative crops of coffee and tea.

In short, British colonialism has reached its long, hooked talons into Africa and stolen the natural sweetness of this child's life. Later on, as an American-educated adult, she musters the support of local women to find a way to bring the sweetness back. Her fight centres on the reforestation of now barren land.

***It's the story of the  
freedom struggle of a  
people who recognize  
and proclaim that their  
birthright,  
their freedoms, and  
their identities are  
rooted in the earth.***

In 1977 Wangari Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. She began by lobbying agricultural authorities to teach the women how to plant trees. Maathai was wise enough to reject conventional Western aid models, recognizing that if the people were not themselves invested in the process the project would die. Instead of giving the women seeds she got them to collect the native seeds from the ground and propagate them themselves, offering a stipend of four cents for every tree that survived.

Why plant trees? Trees clean the water and air and hold the soil together. They allow water to percolate down to the reservoirs and back up through the tree roots.

When the trees reach maturity the springs return. The women build their own homes and outbuildings from the wood of the trees they planted. They forego the starchy, nutritionally void foods that money can buy and learn once more to grow food for their families. They and their children are noticeably healthier.

More than just restoring the natural surroundings, the tree planting leads to years of political struggle during which Maathai is threatened, harassed, jailed, beaten, and publicly denounced.

This film intersperses Kenyan history with the Maathai account, leading up to where, in spite of repeated squelchings, Maathai's network of influence is proven vital in bringing multi-party elections to Kenya and finally removing the dictatorial President Moi from power.

This is not just a story of environmental destruction and renewal. It's the story of the freedom struggle of a people who recognize and proclaim that their birthright, their freedoms, and their identities are rooted in the earth.

*Taking Root* manifests five of The Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it confronts existing injustices; 2) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; 3) it gives me tools enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.

*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](mailto:bard@voicemagazine.org). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*

## 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.

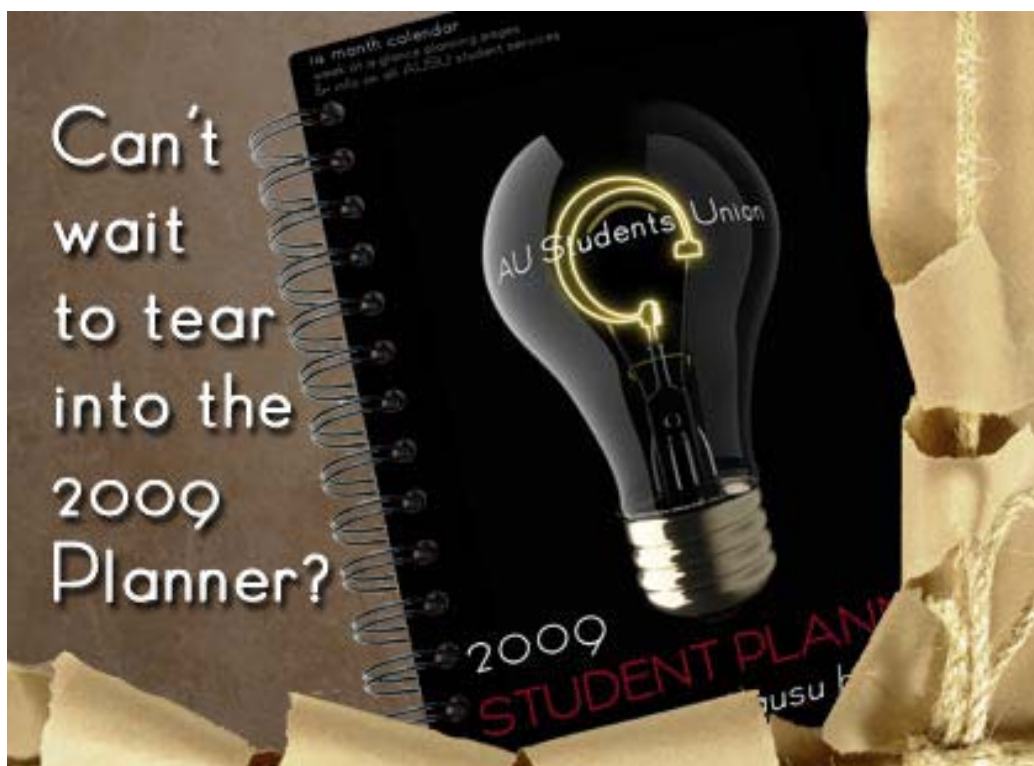
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member 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: Sex scoreboard app for iPhone draws anger

Cool toys and technology may be taking us into the future, but some outdated attitudes are tagging along for the ride: a new iPhone application offers two dozen stereotypes of women and gives users pickup lines and “a scoreboard to keep track of their conquests.”

The app was offered by PepsiCo Inc. as a way to promote its Amp energy drink. The slogan for the app is “Amp up before you score.”

As the *Toronto Star* reports, users can pick from stereotypes such as “cougar” or “nerd.” The feature that’s drawing the most anger from online posters doesn’t seem to be the stereotypes or the cheesy pickup lines, though. Instead, it’s the ability of users to rate their sexual encounters on a “brag list” and then share that info on sites like Facebook and Twitter.

The app has drawn criticism from both consumers and social commentators alike, and the company has apologized on the Amp Twitter page.

### In Foreign News: Hispanic groups call for boycott of 2010 US census

Immigration issues were a hot topic in the last US presidential election, and those issues are threatening to play an equally important role in the 2010 census.

Some Hispanic activists are disappointed in President Obama’s lack of progress on immigration issues and, as the *Washington Times* reports, are “urging all Hispanics to boycott the 2010 census as a sign of displeasure.” Other groups have taken a different approach; they’ve asked the federal government to halt immigration raids for the census period in order to encourage participation.

The question of whether illegal immigrants should take part in the census has divided many in immigrant communities. On the one hand, there are those who fear that being identified in the census will make illegal immigrants more vulnerable to abuse and possible deportation. Others, however, believe that taking part in the census will help pave the way for immigration reform. There are an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in the US.

Several broadcasters and other major organizations have started a public awareness campaign promoting participation, but some activists contend that “Democrats and Mr. Obama haven’t done enough to earn Hispanic support for the effort.”

Further stirring the debate is a move by a group of Republican senators to include citizenship data on the 2010 census form. Even if millions of illegal immigrants were counted on the census they would still not be eligible to vote, meaning that congressional representation could be flawed. The group of senators is trying to “set a precedent that congressional seats be reapportioned based on a count of citizens, rather than all residents.”

## EDUCATION NEWS

Danielle Webb



## University services in the palm of your hand

Mobile phone apps are downloading on campuses across the country

TORONTO (CUP) - One in nine students at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) own an iPhone or an iPod Touch, and students elsewhere across Canada are embracing the technology with open arms. With smart phones reaching more and more students, universities are taking advantage of the trend.

At least four Canadian universities have introduced mobile phone applications designed to enhance the student experience, putting everything from a personalized class schedule to the ability to reserve computers or study space in the palm of students' hands.

Eric Neufeld, computer science department head and a developer of the U of S app iUSask, recognized this niche market as he watched students leave his classroom day after day.

"I saw students flipping open their cell phones when they would leave class, and I wanted my department on that phone—to show students that we're out there, that we're a part of the current wave of technology and can get things done," he says.

César Mejía, manager of information technology at the University of Toronto's Mississauga (UTM) campus and app developer, agrees.

"Our students rely heavily upon all sorts of devices to access and share important information, and we need to meet their needs. We're well-equipped to do so, since virtually all of our routine business with students is conducted online," said Mejía in an email interview.

At Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario a simple survey aimed at enhancing library services turned out results the team wasn't expecting. "From our point of view we wanted student feedback on library services and scheduling. In reality, students wanted to be able to check their own schedules," says Graham McCarthy, innovative technologies librarian at Ryerson.

The library team took this feedback and turned it into a full-blown tech initiative that included involvement from students in a summer work-study at the university in an effort to better serve students as a whole with a variety of campus services turned mobile.

The Ryerson app—like the UTM app, both of which went live in September—is web-based, which makes it available to any cell phone with an Internet connection. "It looks best on the iPhone and the Google Android phones, though," McCarthy says.

iUSask, however, is currently only available for the iPhone and iPod Touch. "One of the things that makes [the app] so popular on our campus is the campus-wide Wi-Fi, so the iPod Touch works anywhere on campus," explains iUSask developer Chad Jones.

The development team is looking to expand their support in the near future to include BlackBerry, as well as adding to the existing features, says Jones.

"We want to get a lunch button on there," jokes Neufeld.

Common through all the apps are features like varsity sports stats, class schedules, campus maps and directories, and information on upcoming campus events.

"We really had to get in the mindset of the average student—what information do they want on their phone? . . . We wanted to know what they wanted to have to manoeuvre through the institution," says Neufeld.

So far, in-house teams have developed all the apps, but U of S is beginning to offer their development team to other institutions. They are currently in talks to develop a mobile app for a large university in California, though they declined to specify which institution.

The iUSask team believes that the key to their success was having students involved throughout the whole development.

"Students are really driving the development," says Jones. "We had undergrad and grad students working directly with the project all the way through. [They] gave daily feedback on features they liked and didn't like."

Students across these campuses are embracing the new technology, with 7,512 uses by 1,477 students at Ryerson since the September 14 launch, and over 2,400 iUSask downloads out of 18,000 students since its August 2 release. UTM's web app had more than 20,000 hits in its first three weeks.

"Students are really impressed that we are able to get all this information to their mobile devices," says McCarthy.

The University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta has also produced iUAlberta, an iPhone app that provides information on university athletics, campus food services, and links to useful websites. While mobile phone application development is more or less in its infancy, Neufeld sees an incredible future for it.

"There's a lot of positive social potential with the iPhone," he says. "You have your day book, your phone, there's the entertainment aspect, I don't see why you couldn't carry all your medical records for your life on your phone."

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### Convocation 2009 Photo Album Online!

Ever wonder what it's like to finally finish your degree and cross the stage to receive your parchment? Look no further than AU's Convocation 2009 [photo album](#). The photo album captures the pride and excitement of this year's grads, along with their reflections on what made their education journeys special.

And on the main convocation page, you'll find links to this year's honorary degree recipients and other special guests who attended the ceremony. There's also a link to [previous convocation photo albums](#) (all the way back to 2002), so

you never know who you might catch a glimpse of!

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