

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 18 Iss 40 2010-10-08

Thoughts and Thanks

Seeking out the other

The Math Diaries

Literacy, by the numbers

Crossing the Line

Poetic voice

*Plus: From Where I Sit,
Health Matters, 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, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



Correction

Re: "In Conversation With . . . Kilmore Place" by Wanda Waterman St. Louis, v18 i37 (2010-09-17)

In a previous issue, *The Voice* published an interview piece in which it was stated that the interviewee was Kilmore Place member Greg England. It has come to our attention that the interviewee was in fact his fellow band member, Ryan Bacchus. We apologize for the oversight.

EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



Thoughts and Thanks

The other day, I received a wave and a friendly smile from the driver of the car that pulled out of a parking lot in front of me. At the time, I largely ignored it, since I was more interested in learning why three police cars were flashing their lights in the adjacent parking lot (I never did find out). But somehow, the incident stuck in my mind, wouldn't leave my psyche. I kept mulling it over, but couldn't figure out why.

And then it hit me. The guy had given me the universal wave of "Thanks!" for letting him into the traffic. And it was memorable to me because no one ever really seems to say "thank you" any more, or at least say it with any meaning. I know I'm guilty of the same.

The incident—and the coincidence of Thanksgiving this weekend—got me thinking about gratitude. "Attitude of gratitude" has become a bit of a psychobabble buzzword, but there's some truth behind the theory. Gratitude is a gift, one to which we'd all do well to aspire.

Yet there's also something about it that rings slightly false. Developing the "attitude of gratitude" is, according to most reports, supposed to bring us happiness, to increase our inner sense of well-being.

That's good, but in a way, it's also slightly muddled. When I'm thanking someone, I don't know that I need to be subconsciously focusing on building my happiness—or that I even should be. An interesting [commentary](#) in *The Globe and Mail* questions our modern obsession with deliberately building our happiness through emotional or spiritual exercises.

It's a good point. When there's a need for thanksgiving, the gratitude should be flowing from me to whomever deserves the thanks, not back at me. In fact, if gratitude becomes yet another self-focused technique or trick, it's essentially pointless.

That's because an action like gratitude isn't as one-dimensional as happiness gurus might have us believe. Human beings, and human relationships, are complex—and should be. The purpose of gratitude is to look at the giver or doer and appreciate them, in all their complicated humanity. And yet that's the one thing we so often fail to do.

Even when we express gratitude, it's too often a matter of routine, a tossed bit of politeness rather than an expression of genuine, heartfelt meaning. It's like when I worked in retail as a teenager, and my standard greeting, "Thank you, and have a nice day" would replay automatically throughout my shift.

In an attempt to make amends, I decided to try a three-second approach to gratitude: when thanks were due, I'd take a few seconds before saying anything so that I could focus my gratefulness directly toward the person I was thanking.

Amazingly, it made a difference. The policy of pausing allowed me to shake my head clear of other distractions and think about what I was doing. I began to notice something: I actually was concentrating on the person I was thanking. For the first time, I was seeing them as a human person, rather than a habit.

Before, it was part of the scenery: the guy would open the door for me, I'd say thanks and flash a smile, I'd head into the store. Embarrassingly, I'd give him no further thought than I would have a doorstop.

Now, I see the person, the human being, the soul.

Does it bring me happiness? I'm not sure. But of one thing I am positive, it really doesn't matter. This isn't an area to which I should be applying any sort of measuring stick of success. I'm not looking for happiness. I'm not trying to use other people to elevate my own inner feelings.

I'm just trying to give back to the people around me a little of what's due to them. And they are what make it worth the trouble.



DID YOU KNOW? iTunes U

Think iTunes is just a music store? Think again. The online content giant now also offers [iTunes U](#), a fantastic resource that contains a wealth of free learning materials.

Over 300 universities, including big-name schools like Oxford, Cambridge, and Yale, have created publicly accessible course materials in a wide variety of media. Video lectures, audiobooks, films, slideshows, and even video tours are among the multimedia available. And topics range from

creating business plans to programming iPhone apps to investigating the ancient world to learning a new language—and much more.

It goes beyond the classroom, too: there are museums, libraries, and a host of art, music, and programming to explore. Under the “Beyond U” tab, users “can access a wealth of content from distinguished entities such as MoMA, the New York Public Library, Public Radio International, and PBS stations.”

The iTunes software can be downloaded for free onto your computer. Alternatively, you can integrate iTunes U with your iPod or smart phone, making learning on the go easier than ever.

HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza



How Healthy Is Your Thanksgiving?

It's October, and Thanksgiving celebrations are right around the corner. Many of us are planning an ample Thanksgiving harvest meal, attempting to balance healthy eating with a feast-like menu. But what is the health rating of a typical Thanksgiving spread?

Red, red cranberries

Make sure you don't forget to include a bowl of cranberries on your Thanksgiving table! Cranberries are significantly high in antioxidants, substances that reduce cellular damage by neutralizing harmful free radicals. In fact, on the ORAC scale,

a scale used to compare different foods' antioxidant values, cranberries are listed high at 1750 ORAC per 100 g serving (compare this to oranges, at 750 ORAC, and peaches, at 168 ORAC). In fact, cranberries possess higher antioxidant levels than 19 commonly consumed fruits.

The antioxidants in those red cranberries can also help prevent heart disease. And don't forget that antioxidants also equate with anti-aging, since decreased cellular damage in the body means a healthier-functioning system.

Of course, the majority of the health benefits associated with cranberries come from raw, or possibly lightly cooked, berries. This Thanksgiving, blend raw cranberries with oranges, water, and sugar to create a delicious, healthy cranberry jelly substitute. And feel free to take a second helping; your body will love it.

Spices and Onions

Cranberries can't claim to be the sole antioxidant on your Thanksgiving table; many spices are antioxidant-rich as well. Those typical "Thanksgiving" spices, like cloves, cinnamon, and sage, pack an antioxidant punch. Be sure to add generous amounts to your pumpkin pie, squash medley, or turkey stuffing.

And while you're preparing that turkey stuffing, make it an onion bonanza. The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges many positive health benefits from onion consumption. Onions can help picky eaters to improve their appetites—but this doesn't mean those with "normal" appetites will be able to eat more turkey! And onion consumption is also beneficial for heart health: namely, the prevention of atherosclerosis (plaque deposits in the arteries) and a mild reduction in blood pressure. These benefits are due to the onions' sulphide content (which is in turn partially responsible for onions' characteristic scent).

With your Thanksgiving onions and cranberries, your heart will be all set!

Further, onions are also a source of fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS), a compound that encourages beneficial intestinal bacteria to multiply. The more good bacteria in your intestines, the less chance for pathogenic bacteria to colonize there and cause negative health concerns like flatulence, bloating, constipation, or fatigue.

And use a small amount of butter, not vegetable oil, in your stuffing. Your skin will appreciate the vitamin A that a pinch of butter will give it.

Turkey

If you're planning on a typical turkey for your Thanksgiving dinner's main course, you may be interested to find that turkey is a highly nutritious meat. Turkey contains several B-vitamins, including thiamine (vitamin B-1) and vitamin B-6, as well as potassium and zinc. Additionally, it's extremely low in fat, with only one gram of fat per ounce of white meat.

What about the alleged "turkey drowsiness," which refers to the idea that eating a portion of Thanksgiving turkey has the capacity to make you sleepy? The theory is based on the fact that turkey contains tryptophan, an essential amino acid. Tryptophan is converted to serotonin, which in turn can convert to the neurohormone melatonin, helping promote healthy sleep patterns. However, keep in mind that this theory may not be necessarily true; the levels of tryptophan in turkey are similar to those found in other meats, which do not claim to induce drowsiness.

Your Thanksgiving feast is all set. This year, take advantage of its antioxidant, anti-aging, heart-healthy, and vitamin-friendly capacity!

Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently lives in Ontario.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.

Green Light

News, Tips, and Tricks for a Healthy Planet

Earth-Friendly Thanksgiving

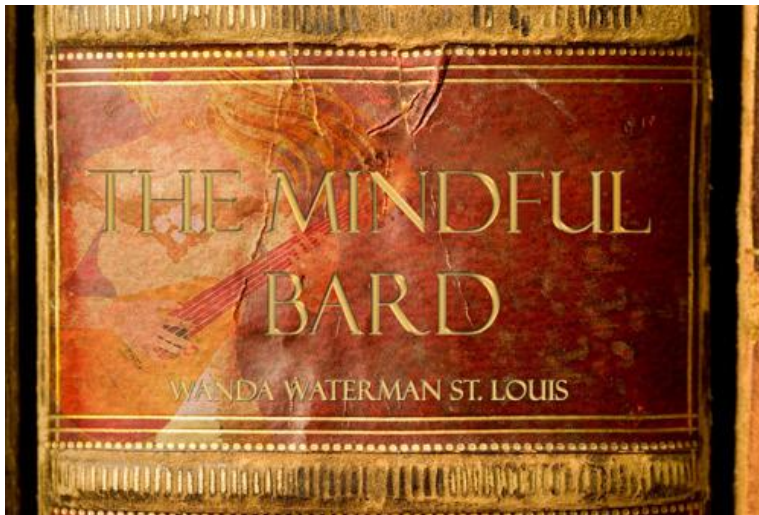


Hoping to "green" your Thanksgiving feast? Good news: you don't need to make for the Tofurky aisle. A few simple tweaks to your meal, and you'll be giving future generations an additional something for which to be thankful.

DIY: Made-from-scratch pies, gravies, stuffing, and sides not only use less packaging, they taste better—and they're free of preservatives and additives.

Serve plenty of vegetables: Some have traditionally seen Thanksgiving as a harvest feast, and what better way to celebrate the harvest than by including a host of vegetable-based dishes, which leave a smaller carbon footprint than meat-focused entrees?

Save the leftovers: Unfortunately, many cooks, whether inadvertently or not, allow a lot of good food to go to waste after the main event. Remind yourself of safe food storage tips, and be sure to package and freeze the leftovers right away so they won't sit around your fridge until they go bad. You'll waste less food, and bonus: you'll have ready-made, unprocessed meals in the freezer.



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

On Canadian Poetry, Part I

“Were art to redeem man, it could do so only by saving him from the seriousness of life and restoring him to an unexpected boyishness.”

“Popular art is normally decried as vulgar by the cultivated people of its time; then it loses favor with its original audience as a new generation grows up; then it begins to merge into the softer lighting of ‘quaint,’ and cultivated people become interested in it, and finally it begins to take on the archaic dignity of the primitive.”

finally it begins to take on the archaic dignity of the primitive.”

Northrop Frye

In my teens, my Canadian experience could be visually summed up by black and white footage of Leonard Cohen in a peacoat, walking alone down St. Denis Street in Montreal in the bleak midwinter, “Famous Blue Raincoat” slowly rising and twirling in his brain. It was all there—the cold, the solitude, the greyness—a petri dish for the incubation of creativity and deep thought.

But that’s just me. Which poet speaks to your personal experience as a member of your culture (or subculture)? It’s not exactly a rhetorical question, because the poet whose work most clearly reflects *your* cultural identity is likely the poet to usher in your culture’s future.

It takes metaphorical language to make the human soul resonate in sympathy, and metaphorical language is the language of the primitive. According to Northrop Frye in *The Great Code*, keeping alive this primitive, metaphorical mode of language (which emerges among those who see a magical link between words and phenomena) is one of the prime obligations of the poet, a directive ironically at odds with the expectations of academe and publishing.

The literary establishment, with the media’s aid, tends to create false dichotomies that can hold up the world of letters long after the rest of our society has left it in the dust. The most salient dichotomy is the stubborn insistence on forcing poets to be mouthpieces for their perceived ethnic groups.

In Canada, as in most western nations, poets are categorized according to ethnic origins, a singular mission considering that most Canadians are of mixed ethnicity. So we are said to have English, French, First Nations, and recent immigrant poets, each permitted to speak only on behalf of the culture from which they apparently emerged. This is a profound error stemming from the assault of colonialism on one more area in which it has no business.



In colonization, one ethnic group defines all residents of the occupied territory as “this” or “not this,” granting privilege, honour, and freedom mostly to the “this.” Today, remnants of Canada’s colonial roots can be seen both in the proliferation of Anglo-Saxon names among the literary elite and in peculiarly European mores, for example a form of tyranny called “artspeak,” so specialized that it leaves those outside the inner circle marginalized, scratching their heads.

In literature, ethnicity simply does not matter, and by this I mean to say that the writer need not necessarily write about personal experience in order to cast light on the human condition or create work that resonates with a reader. A black woman from Halifax can just as easily write about the trials of her Russian immigrant neighbour as she can about her own, and this because writers are, more than in any other vocation, gifted with a degree of empathy that allows them see the world through other eyes.

And so the Mindful Bard’s favourite Canadian poets are not divided along ethnic lines; in fact, they’re not divided at all.

To be continued next week . . .

This article was inspired by a question from Hasmik Khechikyan of Armenia.

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis





From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Excellent in Theory

I love Johnny Reid's distinctive voice and humble nature. With our appreciation for his hits like "Dance with Me," "Thank You," "Darlin'," and more, we leapt at the chance to see him in concert in Edmonton. Apparently others agreed, because he performed to four sell-out crowds in the city's Jubilee Auditorium. We managed to get there on time to see the opening act, which was okay. We were among the hundreds that sat through a half-hour intermission with no explanation and no apparent reason before Johnny came on. On three or four occasions, the audience broke into the spontaneous rhythmic clapping which is the Canadian version of impatient displeasure.

The show itself was incredibly good. Johnny performed without a break for 90 minutes. The nine-piece band and two backup singers in red stilettos didn't disappoint. I prefer Johnny's older material, but I'm sure that with enough airtime, his new CD will grow on me too. His heavy Scottish brogue and our seats in the second balcony made me miss much of the explanations he offered about each new number. I secretly hoped for English subtitles—though without the big-screen projection of the stage, I'm not sure where I would've seen them.

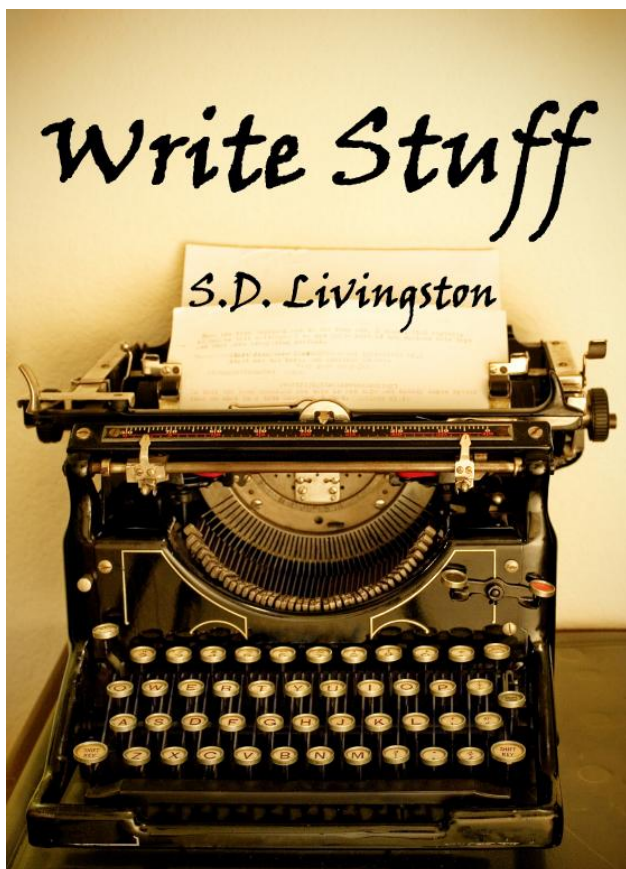
Most distressing that night was the fact I was sitting right beside Johnny's most rabid fan. I didn't know a middle-aged woman could sway through every song, sing every lyric, clap in time, woo-hoo at every turn, and *whistle with two fingers in her mouth*. At some point she must have noticed that I was plugging my right ear and pulling away, so before the next ear-splitting whistle, she warned me. She didn't stop the infernal whistling, she warned me.

That is the evening as it unfolded for me: a mixture of blissful appreciation for the talent of a man and his band, and frustration with the long delay and the intrusive behaviour of some fans.

Yet I feel guilty in telling you all this, because I just finished reading *The Power* by Rhonda Byrne. As with her mega-blockbuster *The Secret*, the book could have been half the length if all the repetitive bits had been edited out. The premise of this book is that love is the force and the power that can make our lives joyful and full. I don't doubt the veracity of her message. It is not new thinking, as evidenced by all the included quotations that are decades or hundreds of years old.

What bugs me is the pervasiveness of negative or unloving thinking that I (and perhaps you) am doing. I should have been sending loving thoughts to the woman who was ruining my concert experience. I shouldn't be telling you anything unpleasant about the night. Byrne advocates that we don't try to change that which bothers us, but instead let it wash over us without reaction or energy. We're told to concentrate on the good, the blessings, the loving parts of our lives, and they will increase.

Excellent in theory, a lot harder in practice from where I sit (in the second balcony).



This Episode Brought to You by the Number 10

When it comes to promoting literacy, I'm all for it. Besides the vast stores of pleasure to be found in the written word, good reading skills put you in a much stronger position to decipher that new home purchase or understand the potential side effects of a prescription. But for all the good intentions behind literacy programs and special events, there's an essential part of the equation that's often missing: numbers.

Do an online search for "literacy," and you'll find golf tournaments, Family Literacy Day, literacy programs, library read-ins, and more. You name it and somebody's doing it to promote reading. Now try running a search for "numeracy," and the first thing you'll notice is the lack of high-profile events. Sure, there are some 10 million results, but the majority belong to government and school websites. Clearly, when it comes to popularity, math skills are still sitting on the sidelines at the dance while literacy is out there whirling around the floor.

Yet math skills and reading are much more closely connected than you might think. Whether it's prose or poetry, half the magic of reading comes from the patterns. From the orderly arrangement of a given set of elements. Elmore Leonard's cool blue prose has a distinct structure, one that puts me in mind of those compact formulas used to figure out astronomical distances: tightly condensed while still covering vast depths. Jane Austen flows more like algebra, with plenty of curious asides and alphabetic equations to wander among before you reach your destination.

And if you're looking for a true union of those two subjects, look no further than this recent *Telegraph* column that claims that "poetry . . . is mathematics."

As the article explains, poetry is "close to a particular branch of [math] known as combinatorics, the study of permutations – of how one can arrange particular groups of objects, numbers or letters according to stated laws." If you've ever had to figure out the metre of a poem for English lit, you'll know how accurate that comparison is.

In spite of all the efforts being spent on increasing reading skills, ABC Life Literacy Canada reports that "four out of 10 adult Canadians, age 16 to 65 . . . struggle with low literacy." Numeracy skills fared even worse (StatsCan numbers from 2003 reveal that "over half of adult Canadians did not demonstrate levels of mathematical skills and knowledge



associated with functioning well in Canadian society”).

If we want to change that picture, perhaps the key is to broaden the approach. To begin with an appreciation of the patterns that run through both letters and numbers, rather than treating them like we usually do—as two distinct areas that have little in common. Even better, include music. What better way to demonstrate how closely the subjects are related?

There will always be students (young or old) who have a natural affinity for one discipline over the other, who can decipher Shakespeare much more easily than they can balance a chequebook. But by appreciating the bigger picture, by seeing the beauty and precision in those underlying patterns, many of them may finally be able to turn a new page.

CLICK OF THE WRIST: At the Table

Happy Thanksgiving! Before sitting down to the family feast, take a closer look at the menu; the “traditional” turkey, cranberries, vegetables, and pumpkin pie have fascinating histories and backstories of their own. This week’s links serve up some unique table talk:

Turkey Tale

Ever wonder why turkeys share a name with a country on a different continent? Linguists disagree on the exact story behind the name, but this NPR radio program presents two of the more popular theories.

Art of Carving

Move over, turkeys: there’s another carving form in town. The ancient Thai art of *Kae Sa Luk* creates beautiful sculptures from carved vegetables and fruits. You can find some of the stunning results in the Bangkok-based Carving Institute’s photo collection. Healthy food never looked so good!

Growing Pains

Cranberries don’t grow on store shelves—nor do they grow on trees. In fact, the small fruits grow on waterlogged vines, and require very specific conditions in order to survive to maturity. This multimedia web “course” takes readers behind the often fascinating scenes of cranberry production.

Just Desserts

Thanksgiving dinner wouldn’t be complete without a pie, pumpkin or otherwise. While you’re waiting for dessert, take a look at the fascinating history of pie making. From preserving a meat filling to anchoring a meal, the once-humble pastry has come a long way!



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Driver, Distracted

It's no secret that distracted driving is responsible for the majority of automobile crashes and collisions. But a recent survey suggests that although not many Canadians admit to engaging in these practices, they're still allowing themselves to become distracted while on the road.

As the CBC [reports](#), the Allstate-conducted survey discovered that "three-quarters of Canadians are distracted while driving."

And although only eight per cent of respondents admitted to texting while driving, a majority said that they engaged in other distracting practices, like adjusting their radio or iPod or eating or drinking while behind the wheel. At the same time, the respondents were often "quick to condemn" distracted driving.

Looking away from the road for even just a few seconds can be significant, particularly when travelling at high speeds: "when drivers take their eyes off the road for only five seconds at 90 km/h, their vehicle has travelled the length of a football field."

As Allstate's Saskia Matheson told reporters, "Our research shows that Canadians do not fully understand what is considered to be a distraction while driving and continue to engage in those dangerous behaviours."

Around the World: Laptop Woes

Enjoy relaxing on the couch with your laptop computer? You might reconsider doing so, given recent studies; although notebook computers are commonly called laptops, the best place for them to rest may not actually be on top of your lap.

As the CBC [reports](#), recent research from Switzerland suggests that "working with a laptop on your lap could lead to 'toasted skin syndrome'."

The condition, "also . . . caused by the long-term use of heating pads," is noticeable as "discoloured sponge-patterned skin," which over time may remain permanently darkened.

While no link between laptops and skin cancer has yet been established, the skin damage caused by overuse of the heat-emitting laptops could possibly lead to cancer, according to the researchers.

And laptop temperatures as high as 52 degrees Celsius have been reported. That's significant enough to cause long-term damage.

Fortunately, the solution is easy: a "heat shield" placed between the laptop and the skin will protect the body from heat-related damage.

AUSU UPDATE



Convocation 2010

AUSU wishes to congratulate this year's graduates, whether attending Convocation in person or by distance. We wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits. You are an inspiration to all AU students!

AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should

check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors - specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

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.

AUSU
Representing AU
Undergrads

Student Gear

2009 merchandise

Clothing
Technology
Fun Items
Home Decor

Fostering the Student Community

AUSU and Voice gear is intended to support your studies and help you feel like part of the AU student community. Suggestions for new items are welcome. Contact our office with any questions.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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