

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 40 2011-10-21

### How to Save a Life

The 25 per cent

### Time to Chill

Stress-busting tips

### Aftershock

Living and loving

*Plus:  
From Where I Sit  
Write Stuff  
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.



## EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



## Have a Heart

You're out for a run, enjoying the autumn scenery. Then you notice that a fellow jogger is showing signs of a heart attack. What do you do?

Well, Kindergarten taught you well: in an emergency, call 9-1-1. But sometimes the emergency personnel can't get there as quickly as might be required—and those first 10 minutes can literally mean the difference between life and death. In fact in some cases, the odds of survival can be

increased by up to 400 per cent if CPR is administered right away.

There's no doubt that prompt action is crucial, but sometimes it feels almost impossible to get started. After all, holding someone's future in your hands seems a daunting responsibility, especially if the only CPR you know is what you've learned from medical shows on TV.

Overcoming that fear can save someone's life. Yet fewer and fewer bystanders are making the decision to assist their fellow human beings in distress. In fact, in a situation like the one above, just 25 per cent of Canadians will jump in to help.

Doctors are speaking out against such an outrageous trend. As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), the Canadian Association of Emergency Room Physicians recently issued a statement "saying too many victims of cardiac arrest are dying because the person beside them does not know what to do, and is afraid to act."

The CAEP also strongly urges bystanders, regardless of their skill level, to perform chest compressions on a heart attack victim—whether adult, child, or infant. In fact, many physicians believe we have a civic duty to do so.

"It's no longer morally and socially acceptable to do nothing," Dr. Christian Vaillancourt, of the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, told reporters.

Worried about injuring the person you're trying to help? While it's possible to break a rib when administering chest compressions, that harm is small compared with the gift of life. "You cannot hurt a cardiac arrest victim any more than they are already hurting," Dr. Vaillancourt told reporters. And in a setting where every second counts, even inexpert aid can make a huge difference.

If you're concerned about potential lawsuits, note this: most provinces have [Good Samaritan laws](#) which absolve well-meaning responders from liability in the event an injury occurs while they're giving life-saving help.

Any CPR is better than none when someone's seconds away from possible death or permanent damage. But those who go beyond the basics can offer much more effective aid. So get trained! Learn the signs of a [heart attack](#) or [stroke](#). Keep the instructions for the [Heimlich maneuver](#) on your fridge, and these [CPR](#)



basics in your wallet. If you're out on the water a lot, learn the real way to rescue—and resuscitate—a drowning victim.

Invest in a good first aid book, something you can quickly consult in case of an emergency. No one wants to think about how to deal with a severed finger, choking child, or stroking relative, but knowledge can save lives and limbs.

Best of all, though, consider a first aid or CPR course. Hospitals, medical clinics, colleges, and Parks and Recreation offices often offer weekend or evening courses through their adult education programs. Alternatively, check your local listings or contact your local branch of the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation. Don't have time to take a full class just yet? The Heart and Stroke Foundation's CPR Anytime program—which you can complete at home in less than 30 minutes—is a good interim option.

If you took a course years ago, consider an update—as many as 60 per cent of those with CPR training have forgotten what they've learned (and this particularly manifests in a high-stress situation like cardiac arrest).

We have a responsibility to look out for our fellow human beings. What better gift can we give than taking time to learn how to save a life?

## CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



## HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

**Stress-Busters**

Stressed out yet? As the season continues toward December, and holiday prep, exams and papers, work projects, and the kids' activities all seem to clamour for our attention, our bodies start responding negatively. As we head into the busier season, it's important to recall some of these basic stress-busters so that we can keep our cool:

***Breathe***

As simplistic as it may sound, the action of breathing really can impact the body's stress levels. Full, deep breaths stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the branch of your nervous system that's involved in rest, relaxation, and other good things. If you're confronted with a stressful situation or know one's about to arise, take control of your breathing. Ditch that shallow

"Help, I'm stressed!" panting, and take a pause to breathe deeply for two minutes. This isn't a very long time span in a 24-hour day, yet it's been shown to be sufficient to "reset" your body into the less-stress, parasympathetic mode.

***Get Enough Sleep***

It's hard to beat undisturbed night's sleep! Sleep is very healing: it promotes cell repair, and a restful sleep state is synonymous with higher parasympathetic activity. When possible, aim for at least eight hours of sleep a night, preferably from 11 pm or 11:30 pm onward. Trouble nodding off? Check out the recent [Voice article](#) on how to improve your sleep quality.

***Eat Well***

If your body is armed with good nutrients, it can handle a lot more! Good nutrition may sound trite, but it is paramount to dealing with daily stressors since it gives individual cells and body systems the nutritional building blocks needed for repair. Additionally, a balanced diet helps keep immunity and brain function adequate (crucial for exam time!). Sometimes it can be daunting to follow the Canada Food Guide's requirements of five to ten servings of fruits and vegetables per day, so start out small: aim for at least one vegetable and one fruit serving per meal. Of course, don't forget to have a serving of good-quality protein at each meal, too!

And beware of sugar highs; although refined sugars (including what's in regular pop and energy drinks) do give us that "lift" when we're tired, it's best to reduce (or better yet, altogether eliminate) these in the diet. In the long run, they put an extra load on our already overtaxed bodies, and they're associated with increased risk of certain chronic diseases.

*Did you know that your body might be dealing with stress—even when you think you're not? "Awareness is key," says Dr. D'Souza. She recommends doing quick self-stress tests throughout the day to keep track.*

### **Exercise!**

We've all heard good things about exercise, and for the most part, it's true. To combat stress levels and moodiness, get out there and get moving! Exercise lowers stress levels, promotes healthier sleep, and raises endorphin levels (those "feel-good" hormones). If gyms aren't your thing, you can hit the road jogging or running, or even rapidly walking for a minimum of 30 minutes daily. The trick is consistency: exercise regularly to receive the maximum benefit.

### **Change Your Attitude**

Awareness is key in identifying stressors or triggers. Often we don't *feel* mentally stressed, so we don't notice that our bodies are in a "ready for action" state. You may be in a micro-stress state and not even know it! Check your body right now: are your shoulders hunched? Is your neck taut? Periodically doing such self-stress tests at different moments throughout the day can help you determine your stressors and discover your resting-state stress levels.

In addition, your attitude toward life events, chores, and experiences can influence the amount of stress hormones your body produces. There's an abundance of research showing that negative feelings hasten disease and bodily disharmony. Can you count the positive things that will happen today? It's a good habit to start out the morning with.

### **Supplement**

If you're under constant, unending stress and feel like you're on the verge of burnout, it may be time to supplement in addition to implementing some of the lifestyle changes above. Botanical (herbal) medicine can sometimes reduce stress and its effects. Certain plants, like rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*) have been shown to reduce cortisol levels significantly, as well as help with insomnia and other conditions that are exacerbated by stress. Don't forget to talk to your healthcare provider before taking any supplements, though especially if you are already taking pharmaceutical drugs or other botanical medicine.

*Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices 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.*



## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman

**J.D. Miner**

***J.D. Miner** is a folk trio from B.C., now consisting of singer and songwriter Darryl Klassen, playing just about anything, Joe Worst on bass, and Chad Joiner on fiddle, mandolin, clarinet, and guitar. Honorary lifetime member Joel Klingler (who writes songs and plays mandolin and guitar) also joins them on their most recent album, *Coal Train*. Recently Darryl Klassen took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman about inspiration, revelation, and speculation. (Read [Part I](#) of this interview and the 2008 Voice [interview](#) with the group.)*

**Good Playin'**

The banjo thing gets to be compulsive. I've bought, sold, and built probably six or so in the past half-dozen years. I keep buying and selling. I have a new Larrivee parlour guitar that I love.

**Good Readin'**

I liked *Nomad* by Aayan Hirsi Ali. The author's a Muslim woman who fled from Somalia and became a Member of Parliament in Holland. She says stuff nobody else can say, and made me reflect on some things like culture. She argues passionately that Western culture, because of the Enlightenment, is simply superior (yes) to . . . Middle Eastern cultures, and that Christianity is likewise superior to Islam (although she professes to be an atheist). Plenty to think about.

I love *The Storm*, *Son of Laughter*, and *Secrets in the Dark* by Frederick Buechner. He's *the* discovery of the last decade! I keep rereading his books, and I have two more on order. He's an Episcopalian priest, but writes gritty fiction and non-fiction. No cliché here.

Everything by Donald Miller, but his best is *Searching for God Knows What*.

I'm re-listening to a CD series by Brennan Manning of *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, a book that literally changed my life.

I love . . . 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian authors like Tolstoy, Chekhov, etc.

**Good Listenin'**

I've been listening to a lot of Old Time music. This is VERY different from bluegrass. Jens Kruger in *The Bridge* CD does what Mozart would have done if he'd had a banjo.



I've been listening to J.J. Cale for 40 years; he's just part of my life. The guy is 70 years old and has just put out one of his best albums yet [*Roll On*] . . . But I'm becoming more sensitive to lyrics, and get uncomfortable at times. What do I want to put into my head and heart?

I listen to almost no "Christian" music. Ninety-nine per cent of it is just simply awful! Sorry.

### Random Epiphanies

Hubble has photographed galaxies 12.4 billion [light] years away. When I go out into my yard on a dark night, some of that light falling on my hand goes back almost to the beginning of time.

God loves me just the way I am and not the way I'm supposed to be, because I ain't ever going to be the way I'm supposed to be. Not in this life, anyways.

It's impossible to transform myself. At most, and this ain't likely, I can change my behaviour, an outside thing. God is transforming me as I just get out of his way. But he's sure taking his time.

### On the Horizon

We've got enough A-list material for another CD. Lots of water and boat stuff, so maybe a "Water Songs" CD is in order . . .

#### J.D. Miner takes on the financial crisis:

*"So listen now, Obama, there's a thing  
I'd like to say,*

*If you can take it from a neighbor here,  
and in a good way,*

*You've been bailing out the banker—  
no responsibility!*

*Why don't you throw them all in jail  
and let the poor go free?"*

*"'Hey Hey' Cowboy Rap," Coal Train*

### DID YOU KNOW?

### Open Access Week



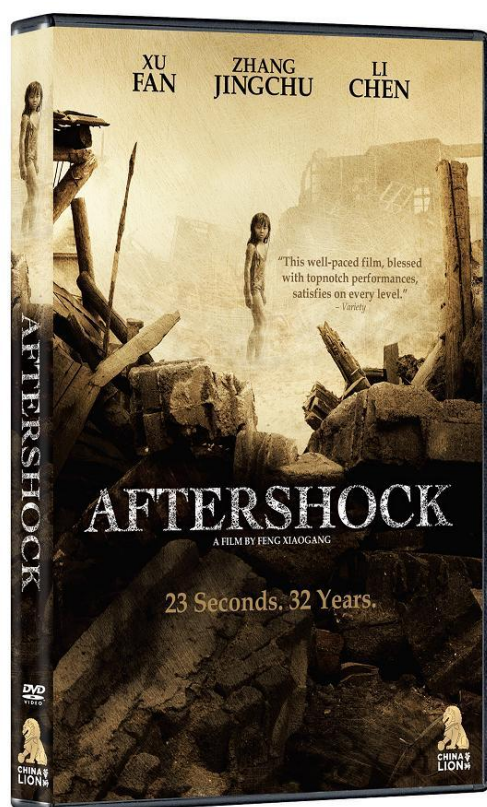
As more and more students reject traditional learning models, a more open-minded approach to educational delivery is becoming popular. In recognition of the need for universal access to educational materials, Open Access Week was born. The event, which provides presentations, activities, and resources, is dedicated to "promoting Open Access as a new norm in scholarship and research."

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Open Access Week is coming up October 24-30, 2011. Events include seminars, workshops, conferences, addresses, and discussions, and are hosted by universities and organizations across the globe. Many of the events are available via online delivery.

Athabasca University will be hosting five of the week's events; topics range from challenges arising from social learning platforms to creating cohesive learning from fractured media to the sustainability of OER. For more information on these presentations, which will be webcast, visit AU's Open Access page. The page is also a goldmine of open access-related activities and resources.

## THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Courtesy of eOne Films.

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

Film: ***Aftershock*** (2010)

Director: Feng Xiaogang

Cast: Fan Xu, Jingchu Zhang, Chen Li

Genre: Art House/International/Drama

*"He who has gone, so we but cherish his memory, abides with us, more potent, nay, more present than the living man."*

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

## Getting to "Forgive Me"

Most tearjerkers set you up by making you fall in love with the characters and then leading you by degrees into a spectacular tragedy. *Aftershock* manages to make you cry within the first 20 minutes.

How? By introducing themes so profound and universal and depicting them with such cinematographic sensitivity that our attachment to the characters and their plight is fast-tracked. Not an easy thing to do, but this scenario—the 1976 earthquake in Tangshan, China, so severe that the landscape was levelled and 240,000 people perished—may be the ideal context for this kind of plotline.

When Li Yuanni realizes that her husband has been killed and that her twins are buried in the rubble of their apartment building, she looks up from the chunks of wood and concrete and screams at the raining sky, "God! You bastard!" The camera angle is from above, making her look small and helpless, covered in mud, bleeding, and with torn clothes. It's an unforgettable image.

So is the image of Li Yuanni as she watches a bus taking away her young son, the only remaining member of her little family. She tilts slightly, like a puppet, and wears a stunned expression as she becomes smaller and smaller, both visibly and symbolically.

The film presents some pretty earth-shaking (sorry) issues, including the experience of loss, the valuing of male children over female, deep-seated anger toward God and human beings, ethical dilemmas, and the proper conditions for forgiveness.

*"When told only one child could be saved, my mother said, 'Save my son.' These words keep ringing inside my ears. Dad, it's not that I don't remember. It's just that I can never forget."*

*from Aftershock*

Yes it appears maudlin—the tears practically fly from the characters’ eyes and there are venting scenes that look to Westerners like emotional debauchery—but this kind of intense sentimentality really is integral to culture in China. At least for me, it didn’t come across with the sense of carefully orchestrated sappiness we find in so many Hollywood flicks.

I was expecting an element of propaganda, but there’s only a little. The People’s Liberation Army, for example, describes itself as “a big revolutionary family.” China is presented as being quite warm and fuzzy, with no sign of the human rights abuses endemic there.

*“[Even] when we’re forced to choose the lesser of two evils, we’re still not off the hook. Fair or not, like it or not, we must bear responsibility for our decisions and ask forgiveness in order for loving relationships to resume.”*

But I assume that this is more a case of selective representation than of whitewashing. I’m no expert but the film does jibe with a lot of documentaries—even Western documentaries—I’ve seen about human interaction in China. There is intense attachment among family members, and even a child leaving home is a tragedy for which no one seems prepared.

At the same time there’s a tremendous warmth among the people and a readiness to dote upon and protect and indulge children and the elderly. There’s also a sense of urgency attached to protecting, maintaining, and restoring relationships.

The moral is that even when we’re forced to choose the lesser of two evils, we’re still not off the hook. Fair or not, like it or not, we must bear responsibility for our decisions and ask forgiveness in order for loving relationships to resume.

*Aftershock* fulfills seven of the Mindful Bard’s criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it is about attainment of the true self; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 6) it gives me tools of compassion, enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me; and 7) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

### How Do You Like Your Voice?

It’s no secret that the patterns of media consumption have changed drastically over the past couple of years—and that they’re going to keep evolving with new technological breakthroughs. We at *The Voice* want to ensure that we’re continuing to meet your needs, and we need your help.

How would you prefer to read The Voice Magazine? Do you like downloading the PDF, or does reading articles online suit your browsing needs better? Do you prefer flipping through articles on a smart phone, e-reader, or other mobile device? Let us know; we’re listening!





## From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

### Our Duty

At this moment three Canadian provinces and one territory are being led by female premiers. They are Christy Clark, Liberal, in British Columbia; Alison Redford, Progressive Conservative, Alberta; Kathy Dunderdale, Progressive Conservative, Newfoundland-Labrador; and Eva Aariak, Independent, Nunavut.

Whether your reaction is “It’s about time!” or “What’s this world coming to?” might depend on your age, gender, and degree of awareness that it’s even happened. And, no, we’re not going there.

While listening to bits and pieces of a CBC radio program (*Cross Country Checkup*, I think) on Sunday, October 16, I heard a variety of callers. The topic, as I understood it, was a combination of why this is happening now, have we arrived, and how more gender equality can be encouraged.

Some callers talked about everything under the sun except the topic of the day, and the host tried to delicately reel them back in or wind the call down. Others seemed to have an axe to grind or a candidate/party to push. I didn’t enjoy those; phone-in shows are best when articulate callers make points that raise awareness or add a wrinkle that the listener had never before considered.

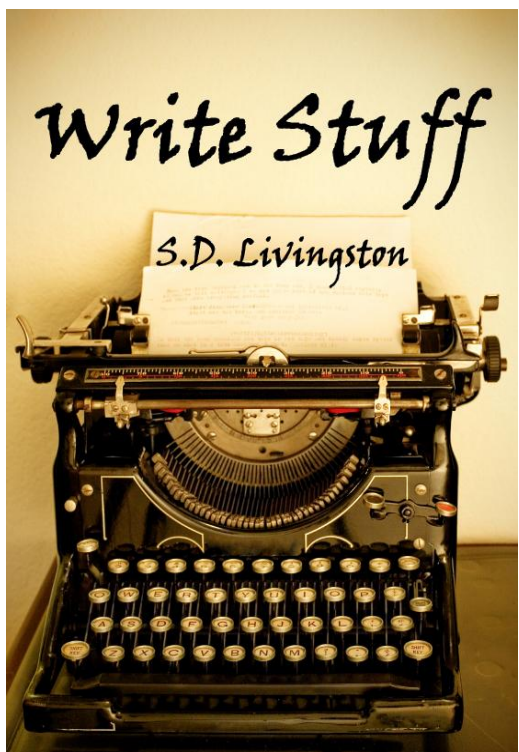
I know a little something about the radio show’s topic. At the tender age of 39 I was elected as councillor to represent a division in our rural municipality. It was a by-election with three men and me all running to fill the vacancy created when Ed Stelmach got elected to the Provincial Legislature. Did I outwork them during the campaign? Did I split the male vote and come up the middle? Was I the best candidate and the result just what the universe ordained? Don’t know; I’m not going there, either.

I was the first woman elected in our division and only the second in the entire county. Neither fact has changed in the intervening years.

I do know that it was one of the best and worst experiences of my life, an education you just can’t buy. I was a wife and mother and only able to do it with the help of a flexible husband and supportive parents. This many years later, Roy is serving in the same role. Everything and nothing has changed.

So aside from what I brought to the position, what made this possible? Thanks to one caller I now know that October 18 marks Persons Day. It denotes the 1929 decision by the British Privy Council (after the appeal was dismissed by the Canadian Supreme Court) that recognized women as persons. All Canadian women owe a debt of gratitude to the “Famous Five”: Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Muir Edwards. They fought the good fight, for all of us, for years.

Five brave souls persevered. Talk radio revived the discussion. And all of us have the chance every day to continue to provide leadership, mentorship, and inspiration for this cause or any other that floats our boat. More importantly, it’s our duty, from where I sit.



## Profit and Pleasure

Things have always been tough in the publishing world, from rejections to slush piles to critics. Recently, one writer even got the news she'd been shortlisted for a National Book Award, only to find out that the awards committee had made a mistake. So how's a poor writer supposed to find success? One way is to combine profit with pleasure—and write about sex.

Somehow, in all the talk these days about bookstore closures and Booker prizes, the one topic that never gets mentioned is erotica. Yet it's always been a popular (if disrespected) genre. It might be a cliché, but there's a lot of truth to the maxim that sex sells, even in ancient times. From *The Decameron* in the 14th century to the notorious novel *Fanny Hill*, written in 1748, writers have always found a market for steamy prose and poetry.

It's the type of reading material that few people would peruse in public, but for all the disrespect the genre gets it can be one of the toughest writing chores to tackle. I speak from experience. I've written novels in several genres, and when I first tried my hand at the romance market I did my homework, scanning publishers' websites and new releases.

Racy romances seemed a popular subgenre, so I dutifully got to work. Nothing too risqué, mind you. Just a modern storyline along the Harlequin Blaze mould. And boy, was it tough. Every sex scene I wrote seemed hopelessly comedic, so I finally gave it up and went for a more wholesome style. (A smart move in hindsight, as the book was picked up by a New York publishing house.)

But it gave me a whole new respect for the writers who do manage the genre well—and the poor souls who win the annual Bad Sex in Fiction award. Established in 1993, the award is overseen by *Literary Review*, an esteemed British magazine founded in Edinburgh in 1979 by Dr. Anne Smith, head of the English Department at Edinburgh University.

The 2010 award went to Rowan Somerville for his novel *The Shape of Her*. It included such awkward lines as "Like a lepidopterist mounting a tough-skinned insect with a too blunt pin he screwed himself into her."

In case you think that bad sex writing is the purview of unknown amateurs, think again. Somerville's first novel, *The End of Sleep*, made the shortlist for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. Somerville was up against some tough competitors, too, including such celebrated authors as Jonathan Franzen and Annabel Lyon.



Still, there are enough readers out there that erotica is thriving, even as more polite genres struggle to keep publishers in the black. As one [recent article](#) pointed out, “the erotic-fiction industry is booming—not least in Toronto, where a monthly meet-up and open mic evening for writers and fans recently kicked off.”

It’s certainly not a genre for every author but it’s one of the toughest to get right, so perhaps it’s time someone launched a Good Sex in Fiction award. Let’s see now—how do you spell lepidopterist . . .

## CLICK OF THE WRIST

## Play Ball!

**If you’re a baseball fan, chances are you’ll be glued to the TV this week as the World Series continues. During the downtime between innings, check out a few of these links to uncover some of the mysteries behind curveballs, pitching arms, and how to hit a home run.**

### Math and Physics Class

Baseball’s not all fun and games—there’s serious science at work here. This fascinating article from MSNBC.com answers odd math and physics-related questions about the game, like why the “best team doesn’t always have the best record” and whether it’s better to slide head or feet-first.

### Curveball

Curveballs are notorious for their ability to flummox even the most talented hitter. Why can’t we predict well where they’ll end up? This NPR article and interview suggest that the problem lies with our visual perception and the way we see the world. You’ll never look at a curveball the same way again!

### Out of the Park

What’s the secret to hitting a home run? There’s a lot going on: the legendary sweet spot, pitch speed, swing speed, and more. *Popular Mechanics* stops time on a home run-hitting swing to demonstrate what’s involved.

### Quick Eye

Ninety miles an hour seems like blink-and-you’ll-miss-it. Could you react in time to hit a fastball thrown at those speeds? Try the Exploratorium’s simulation to find out!





## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Record Race

Ever watched kids racing across a schoolyard? The energy of youth is mind-boggling, but that doesn't mean we're doomed to an increasingly less active lifestyle. As one runner in Toronto's waterfront marathon last weekend proved, age has nothing to do with fitness—or stamina.

As the CBC [reports](#), Fauja Singh set a world record when he became “the oldest person — and the first centenarian — to ever accomplish a run of that distance.”

Singh, who was born in India and doesn't speak English, has been nicknamed the “Turbaned Tornado.” This wasn't his first record-setting run; he also holds the record for the 90-plus category for his run time during a 2003 marathon.

Surprisingly, Singh's accomplishment wasn't the result of a lifetime of training. In fact, he began running “about 20 years ago”—around age 80—“after losing his wife and child to ‘tragic circumstances.’”

Despite the tragedy—which he doesn't speak about—Singh has made a point of pursuing the good. Among his fitness secrets are “maintaining a constant focus on the positive.” Additionally, he runs “to raise money for local charities.”

### Around the World: Dirty Calls

Cellphones pressed to the listener's ear—it's a common enough sight. But if concerns about cancer aren't enough to start you using a hands-free device, consider this: your phone may be harbouring dangerous bacteria.

As the CBC [reports](#), a recent UK study shows that “[more] than 90 per cent of cellphones tested harboured bacteria.” And even more shockingly, “one in six cellphones . . . had traces of E. coli bacteria from fecal matter.”

The bacteria numbers are disturbing, especially since 95 per cent of cellphone users claimed to wash their hands regularly. Although some may have been fudging the truth—and others may have poor handwashing hygiene—there's something else at play here, too.

Dr. Ron Cutler of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine believes that the warmth emitted by cellphones makes them the ideal breeding ground for bacteria. “As you speak on your phone too much, it heats up,” he told reporters.

Given these conditions, certain fecal bacteria “can survive on hands and surfaces for hours” and are “easily transferred by touch.”

It's time to put down the phone and head for the soap and water!

**AUSU UPDATE: October 21, 2011****Bethany Tynes, President****AUSU congratulates new party leaders!**

AU students are spread all over Canada and the world, but AU's funding comes from the Government of Alberta, so it's important for us, as AU students, to remain aware of political issues in Alberta. Alberta's political parties have recently undergone some transitions, as both the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties recently elected new leaders: Dr. Raj Sherman will now head up the Liberal party, while Alison Redford has been selected to lead the Progressive Conservatives. Redford was sworn in as Premier of Alberta on Friday, October 7. AUSU would like to thank all those who participated in the leadership races, and congratulate Sherman and Redford on their wins.

**Councillors training to serve you better**

All eight current AUSU councillors, as well as our two full-time student service staff, are currently involved in a Certified Student Leader training program through the National Centre for Student Leadership. This training covers critical issues such as successful communication, strategic planning, and conflict resolution, which we hope will better equip us to work productively together to serve the needs of our student members.

**Increased student representation at AU**

At most Alberta universities, two of the highest decision-making bodies are the Board of Governors, which provides strategic direction, and the General Faculties Council, which deals with academic matters. At AU, meanwhile, there has always been a Governing Council and an Academic Council—until recently! The Alberta Minister of Advanced Education and Technology has amended the Athabasca University regulations, moving AU closer into line with other Alberta universities. AU's Governing Council has now been replaced by a Board of Governors, and while this is mostly a change in nomenclature, the transformation as AU moves from an Academic Council (AUAC) to a General Faculties Council (AUGFC) will be more noticeable. AUSU is particularly pleased that undergraduate students at AU will now have two seats on AUGFC, as opposed to only one on AUAC. There will also be a reserved space on the GFC Executive Committee for an undergraduate student representative. This is great news, and will allow us, as undergraduate students, to ensure that our voice is heard within this important decision-making body at AU!

**What are your course materials preferences?**

AU is currently re-examining their course materials model. Currently, the cost of all undergraduate courses includes access to the necessary textbooks, and these are usually mailed directly to your door. This is convenient for many students, but many others have asked for the opportunity to look for bargains elsewhere, or to buy and sell used textbooks. What about you? How do you feel about the course materials system at AU? AU is asking students for their opinion! The question currently being posed to students is as follows:

In response to student feedback, AU is considering changing the way in which students access or receive their learning resources. Currently, all the learning resources costs are covered through tuition fees and the learning resources fee. These costs include textbooks, printed materials, access to the LMS and other digital resources, copyright fees for third party materials, and the administrative costs associated with the production of such

materials. For items that a student could purchase directly from a source other than AU (e.g., books, e-books), which of the following options would you prefer?

- To purchase materials directly from a non-Athabasca University source such as Amazon
- To have the choice to purchase course materials from either AU or a different source such as Amazon
- To purchase course materials from AU but have the learning resources fee reflect the actual cost of the materials for the particular course (for example, if the learning resources in Course A cost \$100, then the learning resources fee would be \$100)
- The status quo (a fixed learning services fee per course –currently about \$170)

Email us your thoughts and we'll make sure that they're voiced in the appropriate committee!

### **AU honorary doctorates**

Did you know that AU bestows honorary doctorates each year at Convocation? Do you have an idea for someone you'd like to see honoured by the university? Candidates should "have distinguished themselves in education, science, the arts, public service, or other areas, and have made significant life-long contributions to endeavours consistent with the mandate and purpose of Athabasca University." AUSU has a seat on the committee that nominates and selects the recipients of honorary doctorates, so to have your voice heard, drop us an email with your thoughts!

### **Have you heard . . .**

. . . that we still have some of our awesome 2011 AUSU Handbook/Planners available? Some of the information in these little books is priceless when it comes to helping AU students navigate the university and our services—but they're free for you, just for being an AUSU member! We even mail them right to your door. All you have to do is ask!

. . . about our SmartDraw program? We've been arranging for a licence for our students to use this software for the last few years. It lets you create detailed charts and insert them into your assignments (even ones you submit as Word or PDF documents). The company has warned us, though, that there will be a massive price increase next year, so we want to know if our students feel that the software is a help to them, or if they'd rather have us look into other options. Get your copy today, and let us know what you think.

. . . there's a new AUSU website on the way? We want our site to provide dynamic content and updates so that it's a place that you, as an AU student, WANT to visit regularly! If you have suggestions on content you'd like to see on our website, please get in touch with us to share your ideas.

. . . AUSU has scholarships, awards, and bursaries for our student members? The next major awards deadline is November 1, but some bursaries are also available year-round. Make sure you check our site for more information!

### **Get in touch with us**

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany at [president@ausu.org](mailto:president@ausu.org). You can also email our office at [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org) or call 1.800.788.9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

*This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).*



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## THE VOICE

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