

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 44 2012-11-16

**December**

Student holidays

**Got the Blahs?**

Good mood food

**Cross-Border Voting**

Canadian, American

*Plus:  
The Mindful Bard  
Write Stuff  
and much more!*



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***The Voice  
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[www.voicemagazine.org](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

500 Energy Square  
10109 – 106 ST NW  
Edmonton AB  
T5J 3L7

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email  
[voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org)

**Publisher**

AU Students' Union

**Editor-In-Chief**

Tamra Ross

**Managing Editor**

Christina M. Frey

**Regular Contributors**

Hazel Anaka  
Katie D'Souza  
S.D. Livingston  
Wanda Waterman

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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comments to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please  
indicate if we may publish your letter.



## CANADIAN VOTER, AMERICAN ELECTION

Wanda Waterman



My family's been skipping back and forth across the Canadian-American border for generations, and many of us, including yours truly, hold dual citizenship. The events of September 11 persuaded the government to demand for the first time that we get passports to move between our two native lands, for which inconvenience we felt mildly insulted.

Though I was born in the US, my family came to Canada when I was three. I was raised, educated, and indoctrinated in the ignorance, apathy, and commitment to tolerance and moderation that makes us proud to be Canucks.

For the last year I've been staying in the North Country (everything above Crawford's Notch) of New Hampshire. It's in the mountains, winters are cold, and the natural splendour makes your jaw drop. Just like home. You'd think.

My dad's a born and bred New Englander, and I'm now residing in the town where he grew up. I share a lot of the values of the people here: the stoicism, the commitment to hard work, and the sense of honour.

A sense of connection between Canada and New England goes way back. In 1812, a proposed invasion of Canada (then still a small British colony) by a group of overzealous Americans, still a bit heady from the success of the Revolution, was met with a stubborn recalcitrance from New Englanders. Despite a zealous marketing campaign, every last one of the Northerners was against the invasion, maybe because, like our family, everyone had relatives in Canada. There really was no good reason to go to war against Cousin Resolved across the border in Danville.

In spite of the historical and familial ties, however, the thinking remains different between the two nationalities. When I came here I was already well aware that differing histories and propagandas had rendered certain topics of discussion untouchable. I told myself that I wouldn't get into political discussions, and in over a year I've only slipped up twice: once by pointing out that maybe the antipathy to socialized medicine was a symptom of a lingering fear of communism, and a second time by admitting that I could not take sides on the abortion issue.

Emotions are heavily invested in certain issues, and it's easy to offend. Americans tend to define themselves more by their belief systems. They're also a little more drawn to confrontation; they don't mind hurting feelings and calling each other idiots, but for Canadians that just doesn't seem right.

So it was with slight trepidation that I decide to vote in the 2012 presidential election.

The polls are in a large brick community building. Outside, an assortment of ancient men in plaid flannel jackets and hardware store hats are standing around or leaning on a fence, holding Mitt Romney signs. I ask them if it's a good day to vote.

"Aaaany day's a good day to vooote," one answers, with dollops of New England inflection. "But it's an aaaaawful cold one!"

I think to myself: *They can probably tell just by looking at you that you believe in social anarchy, natural food, and putting all of Wall Street in jail. Shut your mouth and keep walking.*

I enter a huge community hall with a few tables, about a dozen officials, and a row of voting booths. Young people in camouflage fatigues are walking around in pairs, looking authoritative. I don't know why they're there, and neither, it seems, does anyone else.

Back home in Bear River, Nova Scotia, we vote on the first floor of the fire department, moving through a hallway and two crammed rooms before reaching the booths. Nobody ever pickets outside. The voter is greeted with smiles of approval. *We're glad you came*, they seem to say. Those who know you chat you up and ask about your folks.

There's some of that here in small-town New Hampshire, too, but with that coating of frost we've come to expect of New Englanders. In both places there's a super-friendly, perky person making everyone feel at home, as well as a curmudgeon who openly disdains the way things are done now.

I show my passport and birth certificate at the table in the entrance. They have to call the capital in my case, because I have neither a New Hampshire driver's license nor a social security number. But they're happy to do it and even seem a bit pleased—this is a first for them, and they mention this several times. Some of the older people remember my dad, uncle, and aunts; this makes it seem just like home.

After I leave I recall my father telling me how my grandparents used to drive to the polls here. My Vermont grandmother always voted Democrat and my New Hampshire grandfather always voted Republican. He would kvetch at her all the way to the polls: "Why are we even bothering to go? We'll just cancel each out!"

My grandmother would sit there in stony Yankee silence and then vote her way.

That's the spirit, Gram.



*Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.*



## STUDY SPACE

Maxie van Roye



## Here Comes December

Growing up, our schedule was pretty relaxed. There was school, of course, and other activities, but nothing like the litany of sports and social commitments and volunteer work that seems par for the course among modern families.

The one big exception, however, was December. Eleven months out of the year, we didn't need a calendar to keep track of who needed to be where. But in December? Making the holiday calendar was a project of its own, let alone living it.

Whether you do Christmas like the Griswolds, have a lower-key holiday, or celebrate something completely different, odds are that your calendar's a little more packed than normal each December. And while the craziness of the season is both anticipated and dreaded, for students there's something else looming amid the baubles, tinsel, and baking: exams and papers.

With most courses wrapping up mid to late December, the busiest month of the year takes on a new meaning. Due dates and exam prep knock heads with tradition, and it's hard to really enjoy the festivities when you know you should be studying or knocking out that paper.

As we near the end of November, it's good to start thinking ahead. Do you have courses ending next month? Now's the time to schedule exams--and be sure to take into account your invigilator's holiday hours as well as your own plans.

If your courses have major papers coming due, don't just pop the due date on the calendar; add developmental milestones, too, like outlining, major research, first draft, and so on. This will ensure that you're not stuck scrambling at the last minute (while everyone else is enjoying cookies and hot cocoa in the living room).

With input from your family and friends, choose the most important events or gatherings and the can't-miss traditions. Recognize that you may be unable to take part in everything during the holiday season, but that's okay. Limiting your participation to those festivities that you can reasonably handle along with your studies means that you'll actually enjoy the season instead of feeling guilty--or left out when you have to skip an event to cram for finals.

Planning for December studying is crucial both to academic success and holiday sanity, and the best way to handle both is to create a calendar based on your own needs. If the thought of the next month's obligations has you in a panic, take an hour to outline your calendar, your deadlines, and your expectations. With a little planning, you can make the upcoming season a bit more joyful for everyone.

## HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza



### Boost Your Mood

Yes, it's grey and cheerless out there! As we move into the late fall and early winter, it's not uncommon to suddenly get the "blues" as our mood dips right along with the temperatures. Experiencing this sad outlook is thought to be related to the reduced sunlight synonymous with the colder weather, and it can make us downright miserable. Fortunately, there are some foods you can easily incorporate into your diet to help boost your sagging spirits!

#### *Greek-Style*

You're probably familiar with Greek yogurt. But did you know that it can help boost your mood? Greek yogurt is high in protein, and a high-protein snack can raise your brain's norepinephrine and dopamine levels. Elevating these important neurotransmitters can often improve mental well-being.

#### *E is for . . .*

Yes, you guessed it. Eggs, like Greek yogurt, are high in protein; they also contain B12 (think healthy brain and neural functioning) and vitamin D. The yolks of eggs are full of B vitamins, vitamin co-factors which are often depleted during times of stress. This is important in dealing with the cold weather blues, since high periods of stress can predispose us toward seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

#### *Craving Chocolate?*

Start your Christmas eating early with healthy chocolate! Chocolate contains theobromine and phenylethylamine, both mood-lifting compounds. Additionally, chocolate can lower stress and anxiety and contains high antioxidant levels. But stay moderate; you should aim for one ounce daily, and make sure it's dark chocolate (sugar-loaded milk chocolate doesn't convey the same benefits).

#### *Eat Your Nuts & Seeds*

Well, not *all* nuts and seeds. Those particularly remarkable for their mood-enhancing effects include walnuts, flax seeds, and chia seeds. These all contain concentrated alpha-linoleic (omega-3), an essential fatty acid that improves mental well-being over time. I recommend starting with one handful of walnuts daily, or two tbsp. ground flax seeds or one tbsp. chia seeds. If you're unfamiliar with chia seeds, don't be put off; these unusually-named seeds are of ancient origin and are astonishingly high in omega-3 content. You can read more about them [here](#).

## Fish

Just as the omega-3 fatty acids from certain nuts and seeds are important for mental health, so is adequate fish intake. Fish is another, and often highly concentrated, source of omega-3. A note of caution, however; with fish, there are concerns over toxins and pollutants stored in fish flesh (especially with farmed fish). Eating wild-caught fish is preferable, and twice a week in order to reap the mood-enhancing benefits.

*Got the November blahs? It's possible that you already have the Rx you need--right in your own pantry. Check out a few of these truly good mood foods for yourself!*

## Take Your Vitamin D

Of course this list would not be complete without touching on the importance of vitamin D in mood disorders, especially SAD. Low vitamin D levels are correlated with increased incidence of SAD, and in our Canadian fall and winter, the sun's rays aren't direct (or available) enough to stimulate sufficient vitamin D production in our bodies. Consequently, supplementing with vitamin D (choose the D3 form for maximum bioavailability) daily for both adults and children is usually necessary.

The temperatures have fallen, but your mood doesn't have to. Check your cupboard and fridge for good mood food!

*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.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

## Purdue OWL



As the end of the semester approaches, odds are there's a research paper brewing at the back of your mind. Stumped on the mechanics of composition? Got a grammar or usage question? Need help with a citation?

Whatever your writing-related dilemma, you're sure to find help at [Purdue's Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#), a fantastic resource that's freely available online. In addition to general tips, advice, and rules, it includes resources for specialty writing, including technical, medical, and engineering writing and literature and sociological review. There's even helpful information for those creating essays or portfolios for admission to grad school.

Whether you're still in the initial phases of your writing project or you're fine-tuning it for submission, the OWL is one site you'll want to bookmark--and return to again and again.

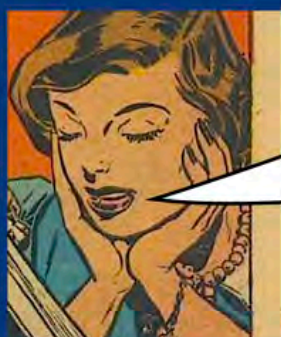


## OVERHEARD BEFORE THE ELECTION

Wanda Waterman

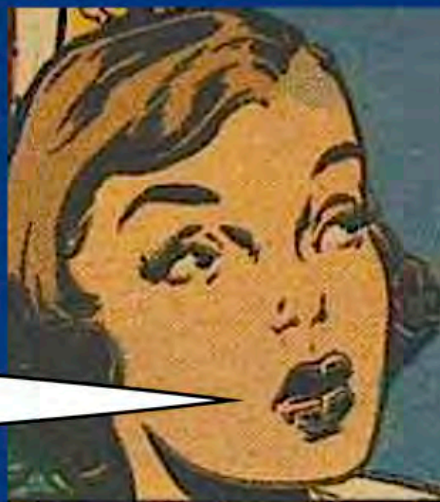
# OVERHEARD

- - - BEFORE THE ELECTION - - -



IF OBAMA  
WINS, I'M  
LEAVING  
THE  
COUNTRY.

COME TO THINK OF IT, IF  
ROMNEY WINS I'LL  
LEAVE THE COUNTRY,  
TOO.



I JUST WANNA  
LEAVE THE  
COUNTRY!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



## Codecademy

If you were soon to be immersed in a world where people in the know spoke a foreign language, would you try to learn it? Not become perfectly fluent, but at least grasp the basics? Well, in a world filled with laptops, tablets, and smart phones, computer code is all around us. And if you want to understand the conversation, [Codecademy](#) is a great free resource to get you started.

It might seem that computers and human language couldn't be more different. But there's a structure--a syntax--to computer code, one that's just as logical (if not more so) than the words you already speak and write. In fact, if you've spent any time at all tinkering with JavaScript or CSS, you'll understand the WordPress line that "code is poetry."

So why would you need to understand all those indecipherable lines of code that drive everything from this web page to your favourite e-book? You don't. Not all of it, anyway. But like any stranger in a strange land, you'll find the trip safer and far more enjoyable if you know the rudiments of how to navigate the streets and buy a cup of coffee.

For instance, Codecademy has a section called "[HTML and CSS for Beginners](#)." That's the stuff that web pages are built out of: the structure (the HTML) and the style instructions (the CSS, or cascading style sheets). Walk through the interactive exercises, like how to build a web-page button, and it will probably make perfect sense the next time you click a button or headline and it takes you to the wrong page. In other words, you might not find yourself getting lost as often—or at least not getting as frustrated when you do.

Most of the Codecademy lessons focus on the computer languages that run websites: things like HTML, JavaScript, and Python. From a beginner's standpoint that makes sense, since surfing the web or downloading apps has become such a routine part of our lives.

And it's not too late to get in on their [Code Year](#). Participants simply sign up with their email address, and a "new interactive programming lesson" will land in their inbox every Monday. According to the [OpenCulture site](#), even New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the White House have signed up for the lessons.

*"[In] a world filled with laptops, tablets, and smart phones, computer code is all around us . . . you'll find the trip safer and far more enjoyable if you know the rudiments . . ."*

Learning the basics of computer code isn't about trying to become a pro. That would make about as much sense as spending a week in Rome and applying for a job as a historical tour guide. Like any other complex skill, programming takes years to get good at.

But we're living in a world where computer code is the language that runs everything from our phones to our smart fridges. And taking the time to understand the basics of that language simply makes sense.

*S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).*

## CLICK OF THE WRIST

## Theme Park

**Maybe your favourite amusement park has closed for the season--or, if you prefer warmer destinations, the busy season's getting into swing. This week's links investigate a few lesser-known, original, and downright odd theme parks. It's time to rethink that family vacation!**

### No Dynamite

Napoleon: dictator or saviour? You may be able to decide yourself in a few years, when France's proposed Napoleonland opens. Besides a museum, re-enactments, and other tributes to the French military leader, the park is planned to include a "ski run through a wintry battlefield, complete with frozen bodies of soldiers and horses."

### Like the Dickens

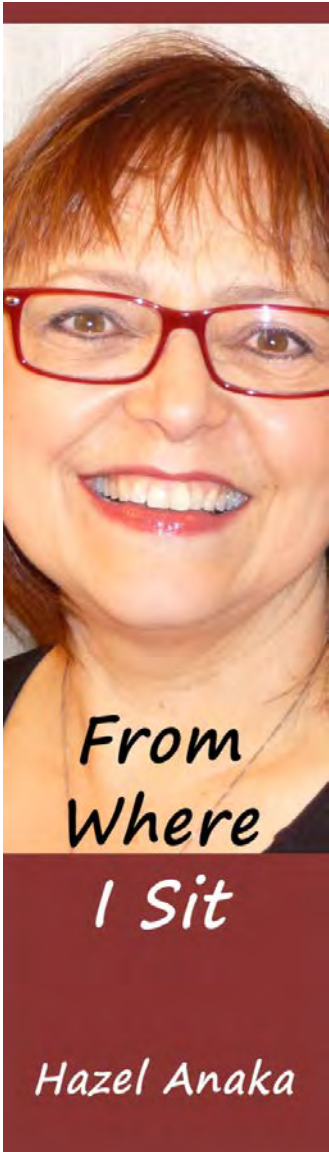
Curious about what life was really like for Pip, Oliver Twist, and David Copperfield? Dickens World brings 19th-century England to life in modern times--right down to, as one journalist [complained](#), "odors of offal and rotting cabbage."

### Flush with Fun

Forget cartoon characters or historical eras; this theme park is dedicated to toilets. That's right; the newly-opened Restroom Cultural Center in South Korea, situated in a toilet-shaped building, includes the history of restrooms, toilet memorabilia from around the world, and "sculpture garden of statues of people in mid-squat."







## Start Practicing Now

One of the good (but unintended) results of tackling an extensive reno is the forced re-examination of all one's things. For months now I've been donating extraneous stuff, throwing out what's past its prime, and packing and storing what I want to keep.

One easy-to-do activity has been flipping through the magazines that come into the house. The goal is to rip out what I want and recycle the rest (though so far the three home decor magazines I get are off limits). Sometimes the general lifestyle magazines become mere carcasses; other times, I find there isn't one worthwhile image or article to keep.

I'm saving illustrated fitness routines, because any day now I'm starting an exercise regime. For my new vision board I'm collecting images of travel, lifestyle, and objects I want to attract into my life. Photos that speak to me are helping identify my fashion style, now that over 50 pounds are gone. Still others are resources for the art class I'll teach.

During this purge I saw an image of a complicated-looking scarf tie and the invitation to watch a video on the *Good Housekeeping* website.

Goodness! First, when did putting a commercial in (without a "Skip Ad" button) before the video become so common? Second, am I dyslexic or what? Trying to follow along or, worse yet, doing it in front of a mirror, nearly drove me batty. Now that I've mastered some techniques I just leave them tied and ready to slip over my head.

There are oodles of tying techniques out there. Stores like Nordstrom and magazines like *Chatelaine*, *Glamour*, and *Canadian Living* all offer advice, but only *Canadian Living* gives the basics about scarf shape and fabric weight. The quality of the videos, print directions, and presence of verbal instructions are all over the map. Scarves.net had still photos and video and print instructions for over 50 styles: something for all levels of learners. All of the styles have cute little names like the French Twist or Forget-Me-Knot. Some models are stick-thin with swan-like necks, while others seem more real. Depending on your size and shape, there are instructions for creating halter-top cover-ups and pareos. Most of us will stick to the usual neck scarves, but someone undergoing chemo might appreciate the head scarf ideas.

I'm no mathematician, so don't ask me how many style permutations exist. Consider the number, shape, colour, fabric content, and weight of the scarves in your closet. Do you reach for the solid coloured silk oblong or the printed square Hermes or the cheap and cheerful woven cotton one from Ardènes or the infinity one from Palm Springs? It's time to start practicing right now, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

## THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: *Mysteries of Lisbon* (2011)

Director: Raul Ruiz

Screenwriter: Carlos Saboga (based on the novel by Camilo Castelo Branco)

Genre: Drama/Art House/International

*“He was a just and virtuous man who was unfortunate.”*from *Mysteries of Lisbon*

## When Good People Mess Up and Thus Become the Scapegoats of Bad People

Father Dinis is a kind of sacred investigator, one of those rare Christians who actually follows the dictates of his master with all his might. His every waking moment is a mission to ingeniously—and sometimes dangerously—counterbalance the effects of sin and hypocrisy in this vale of tears.

It’s always nice to see a sage and genteel clergy in films; it balances out the extremes of self-righteous pedophile types we’ve seen recently in film and other media. This particular priest is deeply archetypal while remaining achingly human, a divine messenger sent to grieve and set right the spiritual confusion in which society tends to wallow.

Angela de Lima is the daughter of a wealthy Portuguese marquis, a man whose charm masks the psychopathology that rules his every thought. She has been raised in great luxury, but because she’s the second-born, she will inherit nothing. Her father insists that she marry only someone who shares her noble status and harbours enough wealth to keep her in the manner to which she’s become accustomed.

Pedro, her innamorata, is a count and also a second-born child; he fits the first criteria, but not the second. This lack, coupled with their intense love for each other, leads to a series of catastrophes. The two are not permitted to marry and thus begin to meet in secret.

Their meetings result in Angela’s name being dragged through the mud by high-minded society dames who feign shock at premarital lovemaking in spite of being themselves actively involved in adulterous affairs.

I was reminded of a passage from a Victorian book of etiquette that proposed that, love-be-damned, the true duty of a young girl to society is to marry someone her social equal or better. As much as society chooses romantic love as the entertainment of choice, when real love enters the parlour (which, as



Jacques Brel asserted, is extremely rare), it's briskly shoved out of doors in a rush to keep the young from making "unsuitable" marriages.

That's where Father Dinis comes in, dropping allusions to God's love for Hagar, asserting the worth, in God's eyes, of illegitimate children, and putting the Pharisees to shame.

*"She has a shrine of love in her heart. They turned it into a cup of bile."*

*from Mysteries of Lisbon*

An interesting touch in the film is the boy Pedro's use of a small "kindertheater," a kind of paper doll mini-theatre in which he stages the characters in his own personal drama, illustrating his own joys, sorrows, and fears.

Every shot a frameable work of art, *Mysteries of Lisbon* is a sumptuous costume drama minus all the excesses of pomp that often spoil such works. The themes are deeply universal and, despite changing mores, have timeless relevance.

*Mysteries of Lisbon* manifests 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 provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 4) it is about attainment of the true self; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 7) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

## GREEN LIGHT



It's common knowledge that our oceans have increasingly become dumping grounds for discarded plastics that make their way into floating masses miles wide. But even if it were collected, where would we put it all?

As Mother Earth News reports, green-minded company Method has just begun marketing "bottles made from a blend of plastic recovered from the ocean and post-consumer recycled plastic."

Method co-founder Errol Schweizer told reporters that "the most viable solution to our plastic pollution problem is using the plastic that's already on the planet."

Currently it's believed that "several million tons of plastic make their way into the oceans each year," with dangerous consequences to marine life and the general ecosystem.

## Ocean Plastic

## AUSU UPDATE



### AU Students urge candidates to improve university funding

AU students are concerned about the financial health of Athabasca University and the effect of recent news stories on the reputation of the AUSU membership.

A recent CBC report notes that in recent years the university has made a series of reserve draws to cover budget shortfalls, draining the once \$30-million reserve fund.

Tuition and fees at AU, meanwhile, continue to increase despite the concerns of AUSU that education is becoming increasingly unaffordable in Alberta.

“I’m very concerned about AU’s financial situation,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “AU is increasing student fees, observing hiring freezes, denying sabbaticals, delaying projects, and downsizing their offices due to a lack of available funds. We don’t want to see the quality of our education diminish.”

“At the same time,” Tynes continues, “I am confused by AU Board Chair Barry Walker’s comment to the CBC that AU is ‘in a very sound financial position,’ as the concerns we’ve noted do not support the notion that we’re financially sound.”

Chronic underfunding of public post-secondary education is a factor in AU’s financial stress. AU students have lobbied Alberta in recent years to address the shortfall; our members call on the candidates in Alberta’s provincial election to make post-secondary funding a priority in their platforms and to ensure that all Alberta universities are funded equally and sufficiently. Public post-secondary institutions need a reliable, predictable funding model that provides sufficient base operating funds to support a world-class education.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students’ union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

#### Media Contact:

Tamra Ross, Executive Director, AUSU

1-800-788-9041 extension 2905

[executivedirector@ausu.org](mailto:executivedirector@ausu.org)

*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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# CLASSIFIEDS

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500 Energy Square - 10109 – 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7  
- Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

**Publisher** Athabasca University Students' Union  
**Editor-In-Chief** Tamra Ross  
**Managing Editor** Christina M. Frey

**Regular Columnists** Hazel Anaka, Katie D'Souza, S.D. Livingston, Wanda Waterman

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