

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 21 Issue 10 2013-03-22

### E-test

Always watching

### The Enemy

*Putin's Kiss*

### Cost Ineffective

Budgeting blues

*Plus:*

*From Where I Sit  
Maghreb Voices  
and much more!*



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Magazine***

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*The Voice* is published  
every Friday in HTML and  
PDF format.

For weekly email  
reminders as each issue is  
posted, fill out the  
subscription form [here](#).

*The Voice* does not share  
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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.



## EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



## Matter of Money

There ain't no such thing as a free lunch—or, for that matter, a free education.

Clearly, the government of Alberta didn't take this proverb to heart when it passed its budget earlier this month. Funding to post-secondary educational institutions was not only not increased, it was cut, perhaps in a short-sighted effort to save costs upfront. In the end, that decision may cost us all much more.

Athabasca University president Frits Pannekoek called the government to task in a recent piece in the *Calgary Herald*.

Calling the move “devastating” to the post-secondary education industry and pointing to AU as an example of a more cost-effective educational model, Pannekoek notes that the province is missing the opportunity to spearhead “the kind of change that is rocking the post secondary world of learning globally.”

Of course, Pannekoek's words are a little ironic given the financial controversy that's unfolded at Athabasca University over the past several months. As the *Edmonton journal* noted, claims of “illegal donations,” “precarious finances,” and “annual operating deficits” have created a media circus; at the same time, four senior executives are being dismissed from AU, and Pannekoek himself is retiring this year, earlier than required by his term.

But no allegations of scandal at any university make the provincial budget cutbacks understandable or advisable, because in the end it's about the students—and not the institutions.

Post-secondary education still remains out of reach for many, and the problem isn't physical accessibility or a lack of emphasis on the importance of higher education. Rather, finances and time, often intimately connected, are continuing to stifle general access to higher learning.

Things may be slowly changing. *The New York Times* reported an intriguing new development: In an effort to bolster declining enrollment, several public US universities are partnering with a private organization to create and offer free, accredited MOOCs. The program, called MOOC2Degree, seeks to attract students who might later decide to continue their learning at the institution (whether physically or virtually).

Programs like MOOC2Degree, offering flexibility *and* free, for-credit learning, are a glimpse of the future and a step in the right direction. But like free lunches, free learning must be underwritten by someone.

Educated citizens are key to the ability of a province or nation to move forward. It may be too late for this year's budget, but the ministry should take notice: The government needs to start removing barriers to post-secondary learning, not creating them.





**Album: Idir, *Adrar Inu* (2013)**

*"He is a good storyteller who can turn men's ears into eyes."*

Berber saying

### **A Voice from a Precipice**

Idir's is a voice perched on a cliff, tremulously intense, leaning forward slightly to see how far it has to fall. A well-rounded and easily recognized persona with a strong individual character, he's also a very clear mouthpiece for his historically persecuted tribe, the Kabyle of Algeria.

Idir is well-known in the Maghreb and had his

American debut in July 2009, appearing at Avery Fisher Hall with Moroccan songstress Najat Aâtabou. He's a dear friend of the much more commercially successful and widely known singer Cheb Khaled, and has shared the stage and studio with him on a number of occasions.

Idir was born the son of a shepherd in the Kabyle region of Algeria in 1949 and given the name Hamid Cheriet. "Idir" is his artist name; in Berber it means "he will live" and is a name often given to encourage survival in children born with difficulty. It could just as well serve as the epithet of the Kabyle people, a subclass of the Amazighe, in turn a subclass of the Berbers of North Africa.

The DNA of present-day Berbers is virtually identical to that of the Arabs with whom they've been intermarrying and sharing mosques for generations, but if you had to describe a Berber racial type you could say that though their hair and eyes tend to be as dark, their skin is paler than that of most Arabs and their bone structure more similar to that of the Celtic tribes—delicate and fine, often with eyes that droop slightly at the outer corners.

You could extend the comparison with Celts by remarking also that Berbers tend to be a bit pugnacious, ready to fight for their rich poetic heritage and more reluctant to be assimilated. This latter has led to much violence and bloodshed in Algeria, where the Berbers been oppressed off and on by invaders, colonists, and their own government for centuries.

The music of Kabyle is part of the Ur song uniting all pre-colonial musical genres of the Middle East (read my *Voice* articles on the subject of the Kabyle, [here](#) and [here](#)). In this album you'll hear Tibet, India, medieval France, and a vein of modern American folk influence as well as Spanish dances and Arabic *maqams*, yet it's all ripe with the intensity of the present-day Maghreb's social concerns.

The first track, "Said U Lamara," is a tribute to Kabyle dissident Messaoud Oulamara, arrested in 1947 and charged with undermining French sovereignty through the dissemination of anonymous subversive

writings. Oulamara played an important role in the insurrection that ended in the liberation of Algeria from French rule in 1962.

“Adrar Inu” (“My Mountain”) is an ecstatic homecoming song. The mountain in question is not particularly lovely; it is, however, populated with loved ones whose faces, rejoicing to see him, are to the singer as the countenances of angels.

“Ssiy Tafat” is sung to the tune of “Plaisir d’amour,” but don’t expect any thematic connection between the two sets of lyrics. Idir sings of the horrors of life during political upheavals, probably referring to the catastrophic violence witnessed in the revolution and its long, drawn-out aftermath, during which the government repeatedly attacked the Berbers, who in turn simply would not stay down. In the song, Idir talks of being terrified by the stories told by his mother, but sings that he himself experienced things at least as horrific as an adult: *“We remember all our fears of youth, just listen to the tales of horror, we rushed under the covers.”* He begs for guidance, a light, a way out.

“Targit—Faisons un rêve/Scarborough Fair” is another song sung to a Western tune that belies the lyrical content: a people’s desperate longing for freedom, beauty, and love in the face of terrible oppression, marginalization, and the silencing of passionate hearts.

Idir plays a lovely, spirited acoustic guitar in a slightly reckless manner that pulses with meaning and passion. The other instrumental accompaniment is so sensitive and emotional that it attests to the musicians’ love for this dear, sweet man. Even though delivery is impassioned and free, the recording manages to avoid the Middle Eastern chaotic dissonance that sometimes puts off the Western ear. The minimalist recording is reminiscent of early ’60s recordings by Bob Dylan, Buffy St. Marie, and Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen—bare, pure, and heartfelt tunes expressing sensibilities both new and old.

*This article could never have been written without the invaluable research assistance of Driss Akjij of Meknes, Morocco.*

## WRITE FOR US!

What topics and issues do you want to see covered in *The Voice*? What type of features do you like best? *The Voice* wants to hear from you! Email us at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) with your ideas, letters, and suggestions.

And if you’ve got something to say about university life, or life in general, consider writing for *The Voice Magazine*. We’re always seeking new voices and fresh perspectives—and submissions from our readers are welcome! All accepted submissions are purchased as freelance pieces and cannot have been published elsewhere (including online in any way) or written as academic papers. To find out more about becoming a *Voice* writer, email the editors at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org).

## OVERHEARD . . .

Wanda Waterman

# OVERHEARD



SOMETIMES WHEN I'M IN THE SHOWER I PRETEND THAT I'M A GODDESS WITH LITTLE TINY PEOPLE ALL AROUND MY FEET AND I HAVE THE POWER TO DECIDE WHO GETS WATER.

IF THEY GET WHINY OR GIVE ME TROUBLE, I FLOOD THEIR CROPS. IT'S GREAT!



THEN I GET DRESSED AND DRIVE TO MY AUDITING JOB.

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN





## Screen Test

Do you ever feel like your computer screen is watching you? Or that somebody in cyberspace is following your every keystroke? Don't worry. You're not caught up in a conspiracy-theory movie plot. In fact, you're probably on the cutting edge of the latest trend in education—online tests that allow the watchful eye of your proctor to follow you anywhere in the world.

It's a response to the popularity of MOOCs (massive open online courses) and the move toward distance education in general. Although most MOOCs aren't taken for credit, several now offer that option. And with millions of students attending the online classroom, there needs to be a way to test them in that same environment—while at the same time dealing with the age-old problem of cheating.

That's where services like [ProctorU](#) and [Software Secure](#) can bridge the gap between old and new. Instead of a proctor overseeing exams in person, they can now “watch test-takers by using screen sharing and webcam feeds,” as *The New York Times* [reports](#).

But the remote proctoring tools don't end with simply staring at a student via webcam. Remote proctors can follow every mouse click, letting them see whether the test taker is searching the web for answers. Proctors are also trained to watch students for tell-tale behaviour such as eyes wandering off the screen toward books or smart phones. Photo ID can be used to ensure that the right person is writing the exam, and some services even analyze typing samples against the keyboarding habits used during an exam.

It might sound a little too Big Brother, but there's very little difference between a proctor watching a student in person or online. The online method could even help alleviate exam anxiety. If students can write tests in the comfort of their own home, rather than at a test centre with unwelcome distractions, it could make a noticeable difference in their final grades. I've personally written exams at universities where the test environment included proctors dropping keys on the floor, putting files away in squeaky drawers, and even a very loud film being played in the classroom next door.

Not only does online proctoring solve the problem of travelling to exam centres (a real obstacle for many students in rural areas), it also eliminates the worry of leaving valuables unguarded in hallways if an exam location doesn't provide lockers.



It could also put an end to the bane of many students' lives: the painfully cramped fingers that result after three hours of writing essays on Shakespeare or tax law.

One potential drawback is the possibility of power outages in the middle of an exam, shutting down either the student's or proctor's computer. But the lights can go out in a traditional exam centre too, ending a test unexpectedly.

There's no denying that human interaction can never be replaced by computers. A teacher's encouraging smile can make all the difference to a struggling student of any age, and many students learn better with the immediate feedback of a classroom discussion.

But for thousands of people for whom time or distance makes reaching an exam centre impossible, remote proctoring could allow them to pursue their education. If you're one of them, it's time to get ready for your screen test.

*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!).*

## DID YOU KNOW?

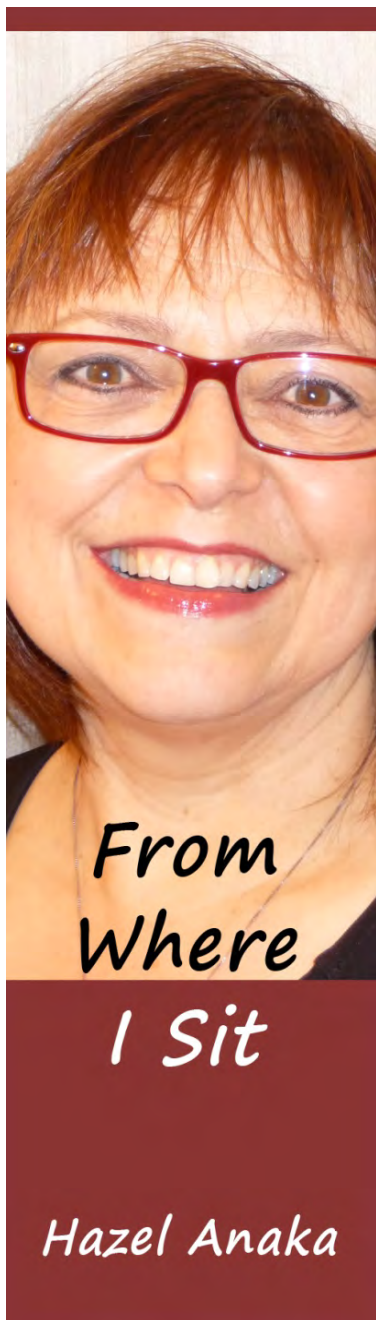
## Online Learning



Need to brush up your skills or pursue an area of interest, but don't want to take a formalized university course? As flexible learning becomes increasingly popular, more and more schools and organizations are offering online learning opportunities. Add two to the ever-growing list: Coursera and Udacity.

Coursera, "partners with the top universities in the world to offer courses online." Courses come with a specific start date and run anywhere from four to twelve weeks, and there are always new courses becoming available as the calendar progresses. Offerings range from English from Duke to organizational management from Vanderbilt to computer science from Princeton. Anyone can study with Coursera; all materials are freely available online.

Udacity takes a different approach; courses are also free, but are available via open enrollment. There are no deadlines. Instruction is accomplished through "bite-sized videos," and the site offers forums and a place to arrange study groups and meetups. Current course offerings include business, computer science, math, and physics.



## Use It or Lose It

We can all learn a lesson from our aboriginal and French-Canadian cousins. Collectively, they have mastered the art of working to preserve and protect their cultures. I'm not sure how it translates into the actions or beliefs of the individuals within the subgroup. But from the outside looking in, there appears to be a deliberate, united effort to shine the light on the best their cultures have to offer.

As a Ukrainian living in east-central Alberta, I am learning that lesson. They say that necessity is the mother of invention; for several reasons, the time is nigh.

I've assumed the role of coordinator for an exciting new undertaking called Babas & Borscht Ukrainian Festival. I created the concept in response to a challenge from our county's economic development manager, who was looking for a new tourism event with long-term potential: something the county could get behind.

The first Ukrainian immigrant to Canada, Ivan Pylypow, settled in this county. Soon others of his kind followed until this became the first, largest, and most homogenous block settlement of Ukrainians in Alberta. Lamont County is also home to the most churches per capita anywhere in the world; the majority of them are Ukrainian.

Capitalizing on what already exists here seems a no-brainer. The idea caught fire, and plans are well along for the August 24-25 weekend. Anything I can draw on from my own memory or background to help authenticate the experience for festival-goers makes my job easier.

I also feel some urgency, because I married a Ukrainian boy and gave birth to two Ukrainian children. Our little Ukrainian grandson is even further removed from our origins. I feel a sense of guilt; I don't think we did a

particularly good job of honouring our roots or passing along traditions. And maybe that's because our parents didn't do a good job with us. They were all Canadian-born, and perhaps letting go of the past and embracing the new was a sign of enlightenment and progress. Certainly some people of that generation were ridiculed, especially by teachers, into adopting the Canadian way.

Bottom line, for whatever reason, I don't know as much about the history, customs, and traditions of Ukrainians as I should. I don't know the reason things are done the way they are. I'm not likely to become an expert; others, thank God, have devoted their lives and careers to studying things like this. I will be drawing on their expertise.

We know the best learning takes place when people are enjoying themselves, so making the weekend fun and family-focussed is our goal. A signature drink; a triathlon of silly games; a passport bearing a new Ukrainian identity; song and dance; and food, food, and more food are some of what's in store. 'Cause it's use it or lose it, from where I sit.

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

## CLICK OF THE WRIST

## Thinking of Spring

**Spring has sprung—according to the calendar, that is. The weather forecast and the frozen soil seem to put the lie to the notion that we've entered a balmy season. Is your itch to start gardening getting out of hand? Despite the outdoor temperatures, it's not too early to start planning and planting your garden! This week's links show you how.**

### Start Them Young

One of the best ways to get a head start on the gardening season is to begin your seedlings indoors, waiting until warmer temperatures to plant them outside. This informative *Organic Gardening* piece guides you step-by-step through selecting seeds, planting and cultivating the seedlings, and transplanting them to your outdoor garden.

### Safe to Plant

Depending on the plant's hardiness, you probably want to wait until the danger of frost has passed before transplanting your seedlings to the outdoors. These tables, from Environment Canada via *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, are in need of an update from EC, but they'll put you on the right track.

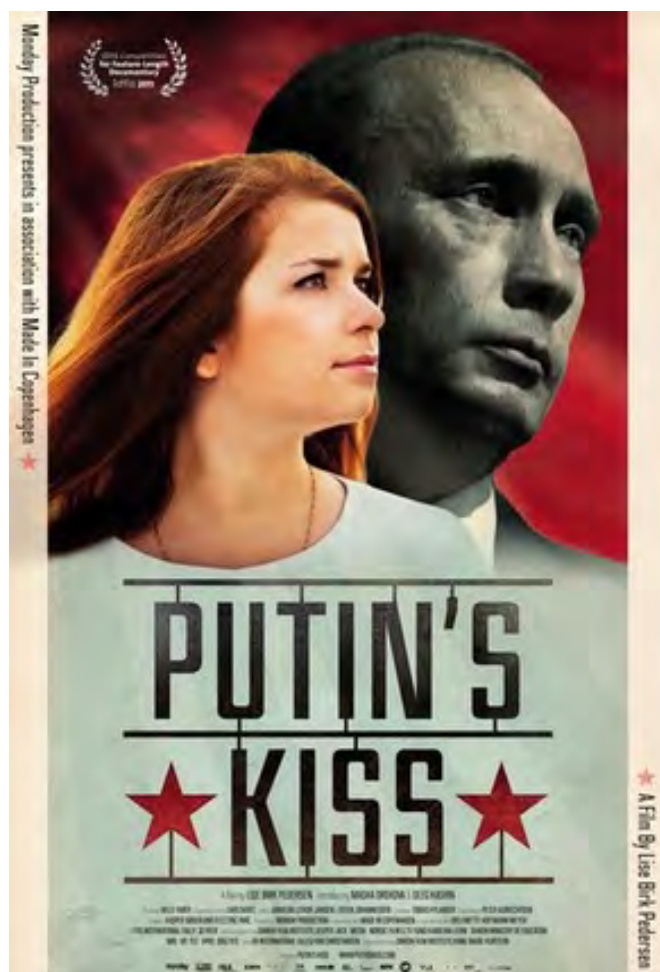
### Little Sprouts

Don't want to wait until summer to enjoy the fruits (and vegetables) of your gardening labour? Sprouting can be done on your kitchen counter even during the coldest months. Bonus: it's super-healthy! This *Voice* article describes the benefits of sprouting and explains how to get started.



## THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Credit: Kino Lorber, Inc.

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

**Film:** *Putin's Kiss***Director:** Lise Birk Pedersen**Cast:** Masha Drokova (as herself), Oleg Kashin (as himself)**Genre:** Documentary*"If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face— forever."*

George Orwell

**An Instance of Amity Between the Left and the Right in Putin's Russia**

We're treated to visions of lively, healthy, drug-free youth dancing, singing, and chanting ecstatically. Isn't this what we'd all like to see? Wouldn't we love young people like this on the streets of North American cities, instead of the dejected panhandlers we see there now?

Masha Drokova is the cherub-faced young girl who heads the main line of NASHI, calling itself Russia's anti-fascist youth movement. NASHI's members root out and shame pimps, drug-pushers, and owners of illegal gambling facilities, and host public rallies in which grocers are publically lambasted for selling outdated groceries.

Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov voices Putin's fear that the Russian people will rise up and dethrone him, as was done in the Ukraine's Orange Revolution. So Putin has invested heavily in NASHI, bussing thousands of young people to public rallies and staging sabotages of opponents' political activities. Says NASHI commissar Anton Smirnov: "We find out where they will have an event, then we will occupy that spot."

The participating youth experience an exhilarating power, and the movement's leaders receive various perks. Not only that, but NASHI headquarters is also cool, looking like a comfortably seedy college radio station, the walls collaged with magazine articles, posters, and bright graffiti.

It would be hard to imagine Western hipsters, hippies, punks, Rastafarians, or any other youth movement raising such a ruckus about outworn food, or being so shamelessly partisan, but then the majority of



Western dissidents, at least those in North America, tend to be left-wing if they're partisan at all. There are of course skinheads, Goths, and other fascists, but these tend to have only a marginal influence. At the shadowy end of NASHI are youth who resemble these rebels, but their influence is considerably less virulent.

*"Putin has invested heavily in NASHI, bussing thousands of young people to public rallies and staging sabotages of opponents' political activities. Says NASHI commissar Anton Smirnov: "We find out where they will have an event, then we will occupy that spot."*

NASHI labels opponents of Putin, including journalists and human rights activists, "enemies of Russia." And they really are treated as enemies, not opponents locked in a healthy democratic give-and-take. The extremists in NASHI fly obscene (in the shape of a penis and testicles) miniature helicopters over their opponents' rallies. In a show of deep-rooted pathology they defecate on the hoods of "enemy" cars. Journalists who try to report on these activities and attribute them to NASHI are successfully sued.

NASHI claims to be anti-fascist, but if this isn't fascist I don't know what is. Huge expenditures are made to support Putin and his policies and to make a show of youth solidarity in support of them.

Masha says of Vasily Yakemenko, NASHI's founder, "He tries to create conditions for a person to constantly grow. But if your growth has stopped, he'll change his attitude towards you for the worse."

For his own part, Vasily Yakemenko's speeches are all sound and fury, signifying nothing, mindless ramblings that say nothing specific but which vaguely hint at the necessity for Machiavellian tactics.

We see the clouds roll over Masha's sweet face as Yakemenko grumpily rebuffs her question about when to serve lunch. We see her talking to her sister later, looking irritated when she explains her leader's my-way-or-the-highway mentality. (She apparently has a bit of that herself.)

In 2008 a new executive body was created in the Russian government: the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, with Vasily Yakemenko at its head, giving him tremendous power and influence in Russia. He officially quit as leader of NASHI, thus allowing Masha to progress in her career there.

Masha entered NASHI at the age of 16 and completely submitted to the orders of her superiors, sucking up their ideology like an eager



Nashi demonstration for the friends of Russia and against enemies of Russia.  
Credit: Kino Lorber, Inc.

young sponge and very competently speaking out of their right-wing ideology. After a bit of time she begins thinking for herself. She's still a zealous proponent of social order and prosperity, but at the same time harbours a deep sense of humanity and social justice. She's forced to remove her rose-coloured glasses when she learns first-hand of dirty tactics carried out against journalists and members of the opposition.

Masha's speech at the election for new commissars shows her stance to be more moderate than those of her peers. She really does seem concerned with building a prosperous Russia, but isn't sufficiently paranoid about those who might prevent this from happening. She loses the election to those giving rants about the "enemies of Russia."

Masha begins meeting liberal journalists, the very people NASHI has traditionally lambasted. Some suspect her of spying for Putin. Others see her sincerity and befriend her.

Masha Drokova's story inspires confidence in humanity's capacity to overcome brainwashing, to bridge conflict, and to put aside ideology long enough to uphold three of the most universal of human values: equality, freedom, and justice. The fact that this occurred in a repressive regime should compel the complacent West to work a little harder in exercising our own freedom for the better good.

*Putin's Kiss* manifests five of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 2) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 3) it is about attainment of the true self; 4) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 5) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

*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.



**Masha demonstrates in favour of her friend Oleg Kashin.**  
Credit: Kino Lorber, Inc.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Look Backward

Where did it all come from? Where is it going? The universe is full of unanswered questions—and that’s just the *known* universe. But astrophysicists are hoping that a new research telescope will help shed light on the past and present of the universe as a whole, and that technology is being built right here in Canada.

As CBC [reports](#), a huge new BC-based telescope will use cellphone technology to create “a massive three-dimensional map of a quarter of the observable universe — the biggest such map to date.”

The telescope, which will be “bigger than six NHL hockey rinks,” is a collaboration among astrophysicists and researchers from the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory (near Penticton, BC), the University of British Columbia, McGill University, and the University of Toronto. It will operate by capturing “radio waves emitted six to 11 billion years ago”—providing a unique picture of the universe’s past.

Scientists are enthusiastic about the project’s potential, with one UBC astrophysicist telling reporters that “It’s almost like time travel . . . looking back into the past and how the universe was at that time.”

### Around the World: Mysterious Island

Uncharted seas, remote, untouched lands: modern cartography doesn’t give many opportunities for such flights of fancy. And yet despite imaging systems, GPS satellites, and other navigational aids, it’s possible that we may not know our planet’s geography quite as well as we thought we did.

As NPR News [reports](#), mapmakers only recently realized that Sandy Island (also called Sable Island), a Manhattan-sized piece of land between Australia and New Caledonia, does not in fact exist.

The imaginary island, which has been “on navigation charts for centuries,” had been referenced by explorers and sailors who “noted its approximate position” but never actually landed there. Modern cartographers included it in atlases and world maps and charts—and it even made it onto Google Earth.

Sandy Island’s non-existence was first reported over a decade ago by ham radio enthusiasts, but it took years for a team of geologists to discover that “the sea floor showed very deep water where Sandy Island was supposed to be.” Confused, researchers physically travelled to the island’s coordinates, confirming that Sandy Island indeed did not exist—and probably never had.

With all the technology available to modern cartographers and geologists, it boggles the mind that the discrepancy was discovered only through the most of primitive surveying techniques.

## AUSU UPDATE



*Dear Members,*

*You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.*

*We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.*

*We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.*

*At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.*

*We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.*

*Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.*

*AUSU.*

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).



# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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*The Voice* is published every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

Contact *The Voice* at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org).

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