

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 24 Issue 15 2016-04-15

Minds we Meet

Interviewing Students Like You

AUSU's Executive Director

An Interview

A Fresh Start

After the Final Final, then What?

Plus:

Hits & Misses

Course Exam: Anth 355

and much more!



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**We love to hear from you! Send your questions and
comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.**

EDITORIAL

All in Favour

Karl Low



This week, the Alberta Budget was released. If you haven't seen anything about it in the news, you haven't been looking. For Albertans, the big take-away is that our province is looking at a 10-billion-dollar deficit. The same deficit that the federal Liberals said they'd be taking for the entire country (of course, they've since gone to 30 billion, so maybe it's not so bad). This raises the inevitable hue and cry about mortgaging our future, but I always find myself thinking, "That's what a mortgage is for, isn't it? So we can have what we need now and stretch the payments into the future?" They're also bringing in a carbon tax, and a carbon tax rebate scheme that focuses on low income earners. I'm not entirely sure how I feel about those. While fully behind the idea of a carbon tax, I have to question the timing. On the bright side, the rebate scheme addresses some of those timing concerns.

For AU students, the take-away is somewhat better. The AB gov't has committed to continuing the tuition freeze for another year, and is increasing operating funding to the post-secondary institutions across the province by 2%, a number just higher than inflation over the past year. While I would have liked more, it is a far cry from Alberta governments of old, when threats to the budget would have been

answered with an ax to post-secondary education funding, and we all would have been told to tighten our belts just that one extra notch—for the good of the government, you understand.

More information came out in last night's AUSU Council meeting, but I'm still doing up the full report on that. Suffice it to say that while the government has made assurances that they will not let AU close, no firm commitments have been made to anything beyond that, and no specific funding is being given to address the issue. The attitude that they seem to be taking is to wait to see if it becomes a crisis. As AU has been through these funding crises many times previous and has always managed to work its way through it, as much as I hate to say it, it might be the right decision by a government not looking to spend money unnecessarily. The counterpoint being, of course, that fixing a crisis is always much more expensive than preventing it would have been.

But as for *The Voice Magazine* this week, we start off with our feature interview with student Abra Diesbourg from Edmonton. A paralegal who teaches martial arts and works to make students into human rights leaders. In short, she kicks ass. We also have a closer look at AU's new course in ecological anthropology, ANTH 355, and if you missed the AUSU Annual General Meeting, have no fear, as Barb Lehtiniemi sums up some of the hits and misses from AUSU's activities in their annual report from her perspective.

Plus, an interview with AUSU's new Executive Director, Sarah Cornett, and a look at the aftermath of your AU studies. Once you've finished the degree, what happens next? Deanna Roney gives us a look at her experience. All this plus education news, film and music reviews, and even a look at how ethics matters in your writing.

Enjoy the read!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

MINDS WE MEET



Abra Diesbourg is an AU student from Edmonton AB. She is in the Bachelor of Professional Arts – Governance, Law and Management program.

The Voice Magazine recently interviewed Abra by e-mail, and here's what she had to say about school, martial arts, and finally having time to read (non-text) books.

First of all, whereabouts do you live? And have you always lived there?

I grew up in London, Ontario, and moved to Edmonton, Alberta, when I was 18. Currently I live in Edmonton.

If you work, describe what you do.

I have a Legal Assistant Diploma from Grant MacEwan University. I work as a paralegal mostly in estate and corporate law, although I do some work in other fields.

Describe the path that led you to AU.

I was at the end of my Legal Assistant diploma when I realized that I wanted to do something more with my life than just work in the private sector. I did some research on job opportunities with a non-profit organization that I loved and I realized that I wanted to work in the non-profit sector. Looking at the Grant MacEwan website I found

that my diploma would be transferrable to the BPA-GLM program at Athabasca which has been the exact program I was looking for and more.

What do you like to do when you're not studying?

I teach martial arts and I like to read (although I haven't had much time for anything other than textbooks lately), snowboard, and generally just spend time with friends and family. I also volunteer for a great organization called the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights.

What is the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, and what do you do there?

The JHC is a non-profit organization that promotes peace and human rights with the community through a number of educational programs and activities. They provide a number of programs that encourage youth to be human rights leaders within their schools and their communities, as well as being involved in a number of events that foster community collaboration to deal with social issues such as bullying, discrimination and poverty.

I have been working with the JHC mostly as a general volunteer and specifically with their fundraising, by helping with the organization of fundraising events and the promotion of the JHC in the community.

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

Malala Yousafzai. She is such a positive role model for the younger generation. The fact that she has not only stood up for her rights and the rights of others by putting her life on the line, but has spoken at the United Nations and been nominated for a Nobel Prize at her young age is inspiring. She is also so well spoken and has a understanding that is well beyond her age.

Describe your experience with online learning. What do you like? Dislike?

My experience with online learning has been interesting! Being the first time I have done correspondence it has had a learning curve. I am FINALLY getting the hang of everything and I only have two courses left to graduate! Not being able to have classroom discussions and get other people's opinions has been one of the downsides to online learning. However, online learning has provided me with the ability to continue to work full time while obtaining a degree.

What was your most memorable AU course?

My most memorable AU course would have to be WGST 422 *Violence Against Women*. It is a great course that challenges you to think differently about global issues. The subject matter is hard to read, and I did have to take a break from the course for a couple days during some units, but overall the course was so worthwhile.

If you won \$20 million in a lottery, what would you do with it?

If I won \$20 million in a lottery I would pay off all my debt, give money to charity, set up my parents so that they wouldn't have to work any longer, and travel the world!

What have you given up to go to AU that you regret the most? Was it worth it?

Over the last two years I have given up a lot of my free time, including time that I would spend with my boyfriend, in order to complete my degree at AU. My boyfriend has been so supportive throughout the whole experience and even though I'm happy it's almost over, the feeling of accomplishment is overwhelming.

Please tell us something that few people know about you.

I am a multiple world champion martial artist, and I received my black belt on February 25.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

So much time and energy is wasted on holding grudges and revenge. The most important thing you can do for yourself is to forgive often.

What do you think about e-texts?

I have not had the pleasure of dealing with e-texts, but I have had some courses that were online reading intensive. I like hardcopies of everything. For me it makes it easier for me to remember what I have read or to go back to something I want to re-read. We rely on technology too much and e-texts are no different.

Where has life taken you so far?

Life has provided me with many opportunities to travel globally. In the last couple years I have been to Ireland, Spain, Cuba, Portugal, and Italy. Currently we are preparing for an overseas move to Australia for me to complete my post-grad.

What (non-AU) book are you reading now?

I haven't read a non-AU book in the last two years! I am looking forward to completing my program at the end of March so that I can finally get to the mountain of books that I have put off in lieu of text books. Number one on my list is *And the Mountains Echoed* by Khaled Hosseini. He is a beautiful writer.



Canadian Education News



Temporary foreign worker solution through youth employment program

High youth unemployment persists in spite of the hiring of temporary foreign youth works (TFWs). The hiring of TFWs is a concern with high youth unemployment at the same time. Industries have turned to Mobilize Jobs to use Canadian millennials to "fill labour shortages."

Founder of Mobilize, Benjamin Guth, said, "We know millennials today require something completely different from a traditional job. They want an experience and a job where they can build

skills...So they are a natural fit with seasonal jobs that have traditionally gone to TFWs."

The Mobilize Jobs program is popular with Canadian Millennials, especially with the "biggest draw" of travel. The program covers all "hiring and payroll tasks, provides housing, and groups employees into team "pods" that live and work together."

Union drive take to St. Lawrence College by OPSEU

The Ontario Public Service Employees Unions (OPSEU) says part-time college staff need "Ontario college presidents" to quit attempting to deny their rights. OPSEU President, Warren Thomas, stated that at St. Lawrence College in Kingston on April 7, 2016.

Union organizers were "handing out a copy of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." According to Thomas, by trying to remove the organizers from the campuses, the presidents of colleges are in violation of the Charter. Seven colleges, including St. Lawrence, are attempting to ban union organizing on college property.

The OPSEU notes that part-time college staff rarely get equal pay, and no right for "health benefits, paid sick days or vacation time," for the same job as a full-time employee. 20,000 staff at the 24 community colleges are represented by OPSEU.

Canadian Universities among top programs in the world

Four Canadian universities host programs in the top ten in the world for their programs. According to CTV News, these are programs in "nursing, geography, education and veterinary science."

QS World University Rankings by Subject ranked the universities. Head of public relations at QS, Simona Bizzozero, said, "Canadian universities are extremely attractive...It's one of the foremost study destinations globally, among the U.S., U.K. and Australia."



Bethany Tynes

Anthropology 355 – Ecological Anthropology

Dr. Leslie Main Johnson recently launched a new anthropology course, Anthropology 335 – Ecological Anthropology, and was kind enough to answer some questions about it for The Voice Magazine.

For starters, what is your role with Athabasca University, and the course?

I'm a professor of sociocultural anthropology and teach undergraduate and graduate courses. I've been at AU since 2000, and have written several anthropology courses or made major revisions over that time. This course is Anth 335, a brand new course in Ecological Anthropology. I am the course author, and am excited to see this course added to our program. I am also the tutor.

When was ANTH 335 created?

The course just opened in March 2016. It was written over the previous several years, interrupted at times by my research leave and writing projects.

What does the course cover? Could you summarize some of the major ideas or topics discussed?

The course deals broadly with human societies and cultures and their relationships to the environment. It takes an ecological approach to looking at the environmental relationships of people, place and ways of making a living. It is concerned with the diverse ways that human groups live in and make a living in their home lands. It is also concerned with global connection and environmental change. The end of the course queries aspects of sustainability in the face of many kinds of global change: changing climates, changing demographics, flows of materials and people as unprecedented numbers of people are moving in response to conflict or to environmental stresses.

What can students expect, in terms of course structure? Can you talk briefly about the assignments and exam?

The course is comprised of 10 modules which are topical. Assignments include: keyword definitions; a case study report; a midterm exam (combining multiple choice, short answer and essay questions covering the first half of the course); a short research paper; and a final exam, of similar format to the midterm, combining multiple choice, short answer and essay questions, and largely focused on the second half of the course, with some integrative questions that pertain to the whole course.

What about course materials? Are there hardcopy books, etexts, online readings, or a combination?

The course materials include an extensive on-line study guide (hopefully readable!) with illustrations largely from my own image collection; a couple of hard copy texts; some print reprints and some on-line articles. There are also some video links embedded in the course (particularly dealing with food sovereignty and the Via Campesina).

About how many students take this course, on average? Is there anything about this course that students tend to find particularly challenging?

As this is a brand new course, I can't really answer these questions yet! I hope the content and assignments are accessible and do-able.

Why do you feel that this course is valuable for students? Are there parts they find particularly challenging? Why should they choose to enrol?

I think that anyone who wants to understand the relations of humans and the environment across diverse cultures will find this course exciting and eye-opening. Questions of the sustainability of our environments and ways of life are implicit in the course. Of course, besides offering insights into some of the great challenges of our times, I also think that the material is fascinating!

The reading is of variable level; some students may find some articles a bit dense, while other material is very approachable. There are some writing assignments, but they are not too lengthy or too challenging.

Students who take this class will come out with a grounding in ecology as well as cultural anthropology, and be well positioned to make informed judgements about environmental, cultural and economic choices that we face in society as we look for human and sustainable ways of life.

Is there anything students need to know if they're thinking of taking this course?

Students should have Anthropology 275 (cultural anthropology) or equivalent to take the course, or will need to get professor approval if they do not have that formal background. At present this course is not open for challenge. The course is second or third year level.

Bethany Tynes completed her MA in Integrated Studies through AU, and is a Canadian politics junkie.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

Write and Do Right

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to write daily about something that improves at least one person's life (yours especially).

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

This week's Study Dude dives into John W. Creswell's mastery of research design. Creswell, author of *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods*

Approaches, offers writing tips, a technique for clear writing, and heart-to-heart advice on ethics.

Write Until You Sweat

Write like you're lifting weights. Yes, start with a warm-up, proceed with a hard workout, and end with a stretch—all done in champion writer style.

Weight-lifting and writing have similarities. The renowned psychologist, K. Anders Ericsson, parallels physical performance with mental performance. When we write, we go through positive physical changes: in the brain. And while the mirror reveals a weightlifter's muscle gains, brain scans reveal gray matter gains. Yet, no-one in my neighbourhood has a brain-scan lying around in the garage. Thus, you'll notice weightlifting gains right away, but brain gains you'll have to measure some other way.

So, let's look at a routine for brain gains: like weightlifting, you should start with a warm-up. For writing, the warm-up begins with reviewing where you left off the day before. After the review, draft your day's writing plan.

Then, the actual workout begins. Clock your time and write fast and furiously.

After the workout, cool down. For the cool down, enter into a chart what you've accomplished for that day and what you aim to accomplish the next day. Voila! A workout routine for brain gains.

I warn you, however, to ensure you read as many books on writing as possible. These books act like coaches. Every weightlifter—and every writer—needs some coaching. So, read at least two pages a night of writing how-to books. That's all it takes.

Creswell has writing tips, including ones on warming up your writing muscle and doing frequent, short writing sets:

- Whenever you have a good idea, write it down. Don't just think about it.
- As a warm up, when you begin a writing project, draft one or two pages explaining your project. Or, you can warm up by writing out something unrelated: say, complex directions for fixing a bicycle. Or, you can warm up by writing about any topic in three unique ways.
- As the workout proceeds, don't edit right away. Just write. Once you've finished a draft, start polishing (editing) your writing.
- Be consistent with your routines: Write a little bit each day. Don't power-out in one session or write only on weekends. Write daily, even if you don't feel like it.
- Clock a time of day for writing.
- Map out your everyday schedule to find time slots to fit in a writing session or two.
- Write for between a half hour to two hours a day—manageable chunks. A good weight lifter will weight train an hour a day. Four hours a day, and the weight lifter might get injured. So, don't write only on the weekend for four hour stints; these stints will drain you.
- As a cool down, chart the time you spent on writing. Mark down the percentage completed of your writing tasks.
- Also as part of the cool down, plan your writing tasks at least up until the next day (or the next week or, better yet, the next month).

Clarity? The Hook-and-Eyes Technique

In previous Study Dude articles, I spoke about different approaches to clarity. One approach by Pinker uses a style where the subject of one sentence is repeated as the subject of many other sentences—kind of like a list. Pinker's approach seemed clear, but a little too simplistic for my liking.

Another approach to clarity by Joshua Schimel takes the *object* of a sentence and makes it the *subject* of the next sentence and so on. This approach created a flow of one idea to the next: clarity. (Schimel would likely view the list-style approach of Pinker as less sophisticated.)

Yet, the simplest and most flexible method for developing both clarity and flow is the hook-and-eye technique as outlined in Creswell.

- As sentences should flow from one to the next, use the hook-and-eye method. In this method, you circle the subject or even the object of your first sentence and draw an arrow to where it appears next. The subject can reappear in the form of synonyms or at least closely related words. For instance, the subject of feminists might appear in the first sentence, and the word "they" might appear in the next sentence, and the word "women" might appear in the following sentence. You would just circle all of these similar words and draw arrows from the first to the second and from the second to the third, and so forth. These sequences of similar words create cohesion and clarity.
- For clarity, repeat main ideas often. Better yet, repeat the name of the thing studied in the title, the purpose statement, and the lit review.

Do No Harm: Ethics

Ethics create value in academic research—and journalism. You see, I'm a budding journalist, and recently, I was assigned to photograph an interview subject—marking my first ever paid photography shoot.

Being a novice, I wondered about photography ethics. Going against my gut, I mapped out a plan to get aggressive by standing in front of center-stage for close-ups and creeping onto the side-stage for side profiles. Yes, getting the best footage possible marked my ethical duty.

And then, listening to my gut, I decided to look up photographer ethics on Google. What I saw startled me: photographers need to respect the audience and stay as invisible as possible. People pay money for events and no-one wants the head of a photographer blocking the stage. If not for Google, I would have made a nuisance of myself.

Similar ethical standards hold for observation-based research. Creswell says that, as a researcher, you need to make yourself as invisible as possible. In other words, don't disrupt the routines of your participants. Stay in the sidelines. Ask questions only when your participants aren't busy.

Creswell lays out the ethics of research:

- Refer to your research participants as *participants* and not *subjects*.
- Make sure your participatory research doesn't further marginalize your participants.
- Treat your research sites with respect. Don't intrude.
- If your participants don't wish to be anonymous, make sure there are no surprises with what you publish about them.
- When doing experiments, make sure that the results benefit every participant—and not just the treatment group. The researcher should benefit, too.
- Replace participant names with aliases during the coding. Anonymity is vital.
- Only show your data to those involved in the research project.
- To ensure accuracy in your research, go over your interpretations with the participants.
- Create trust between you and your participants. Protect them.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Music Review HIGHS

Samantha Stevens



Band: HIGHS

Album: *Dazzle Camouflage*

Alt-pop is a genre of music that is really starting to pique my interest. From the genre's typical pop beats to its atypical electronic effects, the allure of alt-pop is growing stronger. And one defining element of this genre is its ability to surprise listeners with unexpected sounds and melodies and to push the ever expanding boundaries of musical classification.

Toronto alt-pop band HIGHS doesn't just push those boundaries, they smash them down with their relaxed tunes and down-to-earth lyrics. *Dazzle Camouflage* is the band's debut full-length album and the band is quickly gaining traction. Known as "the darlings of Toronto's vibrant music scene"

(<http://www.highsmusic.com/about/>), HIGHS has quickly found local fame. They are scheduled to play several live venues this summer around Ontario, including the Koi Fest in Kitchener, Ontario, alongside Sam Roberts Band and Tokyo Police Club. Often compared to Vampire Weekend and Passion Pit, they have their own sound and add their own flare to the ever evolving alt-pop music. Some of their harmonies even remind me of Neverending White Lights.

With eleven tracks to choose from, I found it hard to pick a favourite. It was even harder to not describe every single track in extreme detail. The music in each song is so complex there is just so much to love.

The intro to "I Do, Do You" feels like walking into a warm and inviting home. The bass heavy beat and soft male vocals create a peculiar relaxing effect. After that, it has the typical alt-pop feel, but the addition of the female vocals at the chorus renews interest.

"Handsome Man" has a bit of a heavier feel expertly paired to the lyrics and theme of the song. But it is the chorus that grabs me every time. The harmony between the vocals at the chorus is beautiful and yet weird, which is probably one of the biggest reasons I really like this song.

But if I had to choose a favourite from among these amazing songs, I would pick "Interlude." There is a distinct country and Deep South musical influence to this song. Appropriately named, "Interlude" is a brief musical pause in the middle of the album. There is just something about it that weaved its way into my heart and I often find myself humming the melody when I am relaxed. It has a soothing effect, even though the lyrics are somewhat dark. As the pause draws to a close, the next track "Careful" picks up the melody perfectly with a slight calypso beat.

"Easy" is the last track that I will reveal, and leave the rest of the musical surprises up to you to discover. The melancholy piano had me melting, but a well-played piano is one of my weaknesses. What I loved most about

this track was the ups and downs in the beat and music. There was more to it than just a simple melody, making the track as complex as the song's theme. How's that for irony?

I would recommend this album for anyone who wants music that is fun, complex, and outright fantastic. Although great for playing softly in the background while studying, the music on *Dazzle Camouflage* will demand attention from time to time. Attention that is much deserved.

Samantha currently uses her skills as a writer to promote independent musicians and raise awareness and support for many global, environmental, and humanitarian issues. Check out her website and blog at: <http://sstevenswriter.wix.com/writer>



Hits and Misses AUSU's Annual Report

Barbara Lehtiniemi



AUSU's annual report for 2016 was presented at the Annual General Meeting on April 7, 2016. If you weren't at the meeting—and I suspect you were not—you missed the official presentation of the report to the membership. Not to worry.

You can access the AUSU 2016 Annual Report from AUSU's [website](#)—look for Annual Reports under the Governance tab, or click [here](#). The 31-page report provides the financial statements for the fiscal year ending September 2015, describes AUSU's activities over the same period, and sets out goals for the current year.

What has AUSU been up to for the past year? Here is my take on a few of the hits and misses from the annual report:

Hit: The updated AUSU website, which now includes online applications for AUSU scholarships, course evaluations, and a fun student survey posted every two weeks. I was pleased to read the new website retained the "instant chat" feature—I thought it got dropped, but it turns out I just can't access it using Firefox.

Miss: The new website excludes the members-only student forums, despite the report's assertion that all previous web

content was incorporated into the new site. I miss the valuable information in the forums, as well as the ability to communicate easily with AUSU council through the Ask AUSU forum.

Hit: Increased direct communication with students. AUSU now sends out welcome messages to new members instead of just waiting for students to spontaneously discover AUSU. AUSU also regularly posts info for students on their website and on social media. With a dedicated Communications and Member Services Coordinator on staff, communication from AUSU to students is on a noticeable upswing including regular e-mail newsletters sent directly to members.

Miss: The new AUSU mobile app was launched in September. Since this service is restricted to students with mobile devices—which I don't have—this is a miss for me.

Hit: The Student Lifeline service was launched in September 2015, providing AU students with free access to a suite of mental health services.

Miss: The new dental and health plan collapsed about a year after AUSU launched it, suffering from lack of promotion and low enrolment. Given the resources that AUSU put into implementing this plan, it is unlikely they will consider a student healthcare plan in future.

Hit: AUSU commits to working collaboratively with *The Voice Magazine*, which it recognizes as a "important member service and form of communication for AUSU." After AUSU's attempt to turf the magazine a year ago, this is welcome news to readers. A plan is under development which will see all stakeholders—including writers and readers—working toward a future strategy for *The Voice*.

Miss: Valuable staff time was spent last year investigating a Writer-in-Residence (WIR) program, presumably to cover the fact that AUSU hadn't already looked into what a WIR was before the aborted proposal to replace *The Voice* with one last April. Research might even have included reading *The Voice's* own [article](#) about Writer-in-Residence programs. Oh, the irony!

Hit: AUSU patted itself on the back for the 2015 weekly planner which contained, "information about AUSU services and council, important AU deadlines, and a variety of other useful tips to help AUSU members with their studies." I love my 2015 planner so much, I'm keeping it forever because...

Miss: Not mentioned in the report is the move to cease production of the customized AUSU student planner. For 2016, AUSU ordered generic pocket planners customized with AUSU's logo. I found the new planner a large letdown from the student-specific planner of previous years.

AUSU's annual report is worth the read. Whether you're a highly-engaged student or not, it's good to know how your member fees are being spent. You can access the current report [here](#), and, if you're really keen, you can access previous year's reports going back to 2001 [here](#). (Note—reading the older reports can be surprisingly addictive, not to mention informative.)

Judge AUSU's hits and misses for yourself. Let us know what you think at voice@voicemagazine.org.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario

Women Of Interest

Jean Sutherland Boggs was born in Negritos Peru, on June 11, 1922, and died August 22, 2014, in Ottawa, Canada. Her parents were Canadians, her father was a geologist and her mother a school teacher. In 1966 Sutherland Boggs was the first woman in the world to become head of the National Gallery of Canada. Appointed to the Order of Canada in 1973, she had a long and varied career which included receiving seventeen honorary degrees. Jean Sutherland Boggs earned a PhD in art history and taught at Harvard University before becoming curator at the Art Gallery of Toronto.

Additional information about Jean Sutherland Boggs' brilliant and varied career can be found at the following websites:

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/rewind/jean-sutherland-boggs-remembering-a-champion-of-art-1.2835334>

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/visionary-curator-jean-sutherland-boggs-framed-a-legacy/article20684691/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Sutherland_Boggs

Compiled by Barb Godin

Interview – AUSU's Executive Director Sarah Cornett, B.Sc, CAE

Scott Jacobsen



In terms of a brief background, what is it for you? Where did you come from? What is your education?

I started out with an engineering degree. From there, I worked as an engineer for a few years, some of that on the oil rigs. Following this, I went back to school for a couple years to qualify as a licensed land surveyor.

I had a career in land surveying in a small business, when I had the opportunity to work with the licensing body for surveyors in Ontario. That was my first job for an association. From there, I worked for the national group.

I became executive director of the national group for surveyors. I found the work with the association interesting and earned certification as a certified association executive. I really enjoyed association work, too.

That brought me to AUSU.

What tasks and responsibilities come along with AUSU work?

It's a non-profit. It has a small staff. So, everything! (Laughs)

I make more copies, send emails, and so on. All the way to assistance with governance, strategic planning, and everything else. In the executive director role, the role, or set of tasks and responsibilities, varies depending upon the size of the organization.

If a non-profit has a large staff, there's more delegation of tasks and responsibilities. The executive director oversees administration and management. However, when the organization has fewer staff, it needs help with everything. The delegation goes to volunteers and committees. It is overseeing and assuring all of the "cogs in the wheels" are functioning. That is, people know their roles, and things are done, which means supporting committees, supporting executives, and various governance and strategic planning roles. The Council sets policy and direction, but then the executive director has to make sure that the work actually happens.

In terms of a personal level, for you, AU is the largest online university in Canada. This means interaction with students can be at an emotional and physical distance, and that can create difficulties in knowing students more. What is your own experience with AU students?

You're right. It is hard because there's little one-on-one interaction. First, there are so many students. And there's not a lot of student interaction until the individual student has a problem. At that point, they ask us for assistance with the problem. So, that means answering the phone, answering emails, because they've come to us with a specific problem and need help. We don't know if students are reading a newsletter. We have accounts from them and have statistics, but that doesn't tell you who's reading the newsletter or who's getting the message. So it's an ongoing challenge. But I'm used to it because my last position was with a national group. It had had members all across the country. Everything was done at a distance as well.

It is a matter of issue-by-issue of the student newsletter and person-by-person finding opportunities to connect. Once you become known as open to connection, then, people reach out to you. Besides, I cannot possibly reach out to 25,000 or 27,000.

Some of them are registered and interested in talking to the association. And that's fine. It's a matter of one piece at a time showing the organization to be open to communicate. People get that message and come to us.

What is the greatest strength of AU and AUSU? Even though they exist as independent from one another, I see a link.

I had little knowledge of AU before I took this position in August last year. It has been 7 months. On the surface, I see amazing opportunities for the person who finds a traditional bricks-and-mortar institution doesn't work for them.

I went to a conventional university for a degree, myself and I have a child there now. That worked for me at the time. I was young. I wasn't married. I didn't have kids yet. But I imagine that if I wanted to do something similar again, because I could go back and get other credentials, etc., I could do it. This would be an amazing way to fit into any number of lifestyles; whereas the 'bricks-and-mortar' institution sticks to a narrow lifestyle: the young, those without commitments, and the recently out of high school.

Where do you see the AUSU going in the next few years?

I think continuing on the track of really trying to open communication from our members, improving transparency, and keeping ongoing communication. We've started that. There's lots of good intentions. We have a good direction, but we need to work on it.

Another thing, I want to work on advocacy. Individual advocacy, we do decently. A student comes to us and they have an issue; we can point them in the right direction and contact the right people. However, I want to work on advocacy in an institutional context. It is assuring we listen to student voices. It is assuring student voices are listened to by government.

We have done great things in that regard. I want to build on it. It will be somewhat grassroots. It's going to involve Council members. But we've got Council members from across the country. We've got students from across the country. We've got a presence here in Alberta. We have potential to focus on advocacy as in institutional advocacy in addition to continuing our individual advocacy.

Do you have any final thoughts or feelings in conclusion?

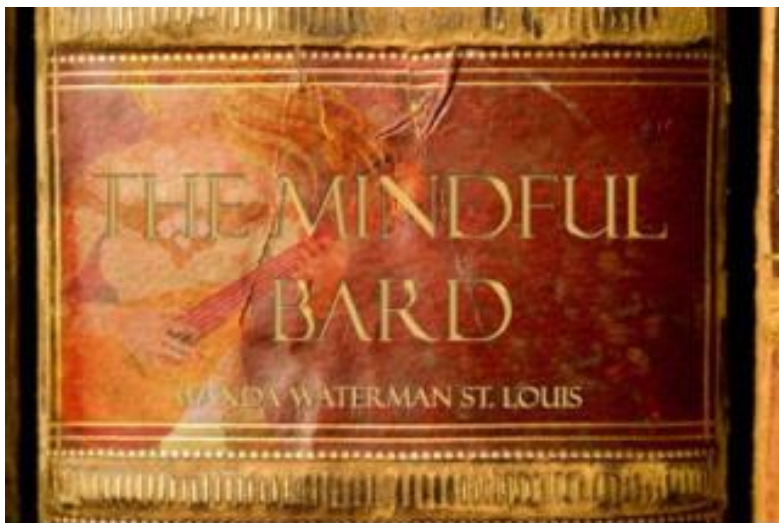
I am enjoying these first few months. It's been a bit of a rollercoaster. It was a really steep learning curve. We have new Council, new executive, and new staff. It was all at once. We have some challenges, but we've made strides. I am looking forward to the next six months and being able to reflect back on the serious accomplishment in this year with the Council members, Executive members, and the staff that we're onboarding as of recent. Six months, it's been a huge challenge, but a fun one. I am looking forward to it continuing.

Thank you for your time, Sarah.

A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad and AUSU Councillor-elect. He researches in various organizations, and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

The Mindful Bard Three Short Films

Wanda Waterman



Eight Rare Takes on What it Means to Be Canadian, From the Lives of Four Bush Hermits

Site: *NFB/Blog*

Article: Hobos, Hermits and Drifters: Three Short Films Starring Wise Loners of the Canadian Bush

Films: *Nahanni*, directed by Donald Wilder
David and Bert, directed by Daryl Duke
Man Who Chooses the Bush, directed by Tom Radford

Being just a wee bit homesick, when I got the email notification that the NFB was offering three old shorts about wilderness solitaires for free viewing online I was like a tabby in a catnip patch. The fact that Vancouver Island's Bert Clayton, one of these "wise loners," wears the same plaid jacket my dad used to wear to stack wood (and which I often borrowed to stack wood myself) was icing on the cake, easing the homesick blues for a few happy hours.

Living in a foreign country can make a Canadian especially aware of the things that make Canada unique—something easier sensed than explained, but these three documentaries do much to distil the essence of "Canadianness," making it salient enough to take it apart and analyze it a little.

So what might be eight best qualities of Canadians, as exemplified in these three documentaries?

1. *A willingness to embrace solitude.*

"I can stay out here for a year without seeing a soul. That doesn't bother me at all," says Frank Ladouceur, a Cree trapper who camps and traps muskrat near the Athabasca River. "If I die out here in the bush, I'll die happy, not in a hospital."

2. *The patience to endure hardship indefinitely in the pursuit of a difficult goal.*

In *Nahanni* a man in his seventies practically moves mountains in a search of precious metal, taking a week to portage camping equipment and lumber to build a new boat, but, in the end, wilderness conditions force him to turn back. He vows to return again and again until he finds gold.

3. *The valuing of ancient knowledge and the readiness to preserve it and to pass it on.*

In *David and Bert* Vancouver Island's David Frank lovingly embraces ancestral knowledge and is ever ready to teach First Nations youth how to survive in the bush, honour their ancestors, and treat others with kindness.

4. *A sense of personal responsibility for building the country and improving on it.*

Bert Clayton takes joy in the thought that while living as a solitary prospector he may be "creating something other people might benefit from;" if his prospecting uncovers a gold mother lode, for example, it would create needed jobs.

5. *A love of nature and a belief that living in harmony with it is a kind of spiritual practice.*

Every one of these wilderness solitaires is clearly a highly spiritual being, rejecting a world that they see as compromising their personal integrity. "I don't think anyone could be more contented with his life as I've been," says Bert Clayton. "The very thought of living harmoniously amongst the animals in the woods and the tinder in the bush— that seems to give me a great sense of satisfaction."

6. *A cheery outlook in spite of difficult living conditions.*

"I love living," Clayton says. "I'd do it all again." David Frank's face carries all the joy of a Buddha. And Ladouceur is so content living in the wilderness that he stays there alone most of the time, even while his family lives in town.

7. *Respect for other cultures.*

Having just listened to a BBC broadcast in which various Europeans were quite freely denigrating the Roma people, it struck me that this kind of talk simply wouldn't be acceptable in polite Canadian circles. And the very fact that even old NFB docs took pains to include First Nations voices in the discussion of wilderness, granting a venerated view of aboriginal peoples and their history, is evidence of the Canadian penchant for social harmony.

8. *"Ingenility"*

Okay, this is a word my grandpa made up, but it's such a perfect way of describing homespun problem-solving that I have to use it. Clayton demonstrates *ingenility* with a self-designed mousetrap that sends mice to their doom by luring them onto a wheel and then dumping them into a barrel. There are many other examples in our history: Tommy Douglas, to cite one, also demonstrated *ingenility* when he developed the Canadian medicare system. *Ingenility* is the opposite of sitting around waiting for someone else to fix something for you.

If you're not demonstrating any of these qualities, maybe it's time to spend some time alone, reflecting on the Canadian wilderness. Watching these three films can help get you started.

Wanda also writes the blog [*The Mindful Bard: The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self*](#).



The Fit Student Managing Your Mind

Marie Well

Tools to Tough it Out

Tough out your dreams. Gail Wagnild, author of *True Resilience*, says, "Even if the road to your dreams is difficult, keep going because it will get easier and the knowledge that you can do it will grow" (p. 62).

Some people get knocked down, spat upon, and kicked around, yet keep busting their hump. How do they tough it out? Well, two things help: a sense of purpose and a sense of perseverance. Lacking perseverance, some people come across brilliant discoveries, but get beaten down by society and may even end their lives through suicide. They lack the perseverance to pull through harsh times. Others, like the

Wright Brothers, become laughing stocks but their passions drive them toward breakthroughs. These people thrive on purpose. Which person describes you? Whether you have perseverance or not, Gail Wagnild can help you build true resilience.

A Sense of Purpose Toughens You

A sense of purpose not only toughens you, but also buffers you against stress.

Your childhood dreams give you insight into your life's purpose, according to Wagnild. As a child, I loved playing the role of teacher, often lining up my teddy bears and giving them math lectures, scolding them for poor performance. I also cherished playing the role of student, fondly recalling the time I stared at blood cells through a microscope in one of my older brother's home lectures.

Needless to say, my dream today involves getting a PhD: teaching, reading, writing, and researching—my childhood passions. So, look to your childhood playtime to discover your true callings. According to Wagnild, your talents and abilities, those things you feel passionate about, were hardwired into you before your first breath.

You could do as Wagnild suggests and craft a statement of your life's purpose. I long to be a beloved partner, a media personality, an academic, an athlete, a spiritualist, a knowledge-seeker, and a professor. This statement covers my biggest hopes and dreams, and guides me on my life's journey. Would I enter a cycling marathon? Possibly. Would I become a nun? I've considered it. Would I write for the media? Yes. Would I dye my hair blue? Well, I'd pass on that one: a beauty pageant contestant for cartoons came just short of making the list. But, I love blue hair.

Also bear in mind that the little things we do can lead to big opportunities. Deflated and jobless after a work contract ended, I started writing Amazon book reviews. These reviews gave me the courage to write

for The Voice, which gave me the courage to write for print publications, which gave me the courage to start learning photojournalism, which gave me the courage to pull out my dusty documentary film camera, which, I hope, will eventually give me the courage to make a documentary film. The more you do those little things that please you, the more you open doors for your dreams. Building dreams is kind of like making glass out of molten sand: each grain matters.

Kicked When You are Down? Persevere.

If you want to achieve your dreams, you need to keep learning, growing, and improving. Previously, I tried to gain a Ph. D, but fell short at the master's level. My writing needed work. So, now I write frequently and read dictionaries, grammar books, writing how-to books, and journalistic writing books. I also read books on methodologies, theories, and academic writing. I'll get that Ph. D one day. Grrr!

Persevering with your goals takes daily effort. Although "no pain, no gain" doesn't always hold true, if you choose a goal you feel passionate about, not even a prison sentence or a public stoning will stop you.

Also, don't blame others when things don't work out. When I came short of getting the GPA needed to get into the Ph. D program, I blamed my first supervisor. I would toss and turn at night, fretting about the hardships she caused me. I spent so much energy reliving all the hurtful things she said that I failed to realize my own shortcomings. My writing needed work. I needed better reading habits. Now, every time I begin blaming, I stop myself short. Instead of fretting and complaining, I chip away at building my dreams—one Michelangelo at a time.

So, find your big dreams and chase them relentlessly. Don't be the ostracized academic who commits suicide for a brilliant idea that gets celebrated fifty years after his passing. Instead, be the suitor who never gives up on her fanciful first love. Be purposeful. Be resilient.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.

AthaU Facebook Group

Lyn wonders if her old credits will still count if she enrolls in the RN degree program. Colleen shares info about AU's new Virtual Exam Invigilation pilot program. Dylan seeks a copy of textbook "The Psychology of Women" 7th edition.

Other posts include convocation, the AU Student ID card, and courses ADMN 233, GEOG 200, PHIL 252, and PSYC 304.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Excited about convocation in June? Don't forget to apply to graduate! <http://goo.gl/KQSSCG> #AUGrad16."

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "Hey #AthaU Students.. did you know that you can get an @AthabascaU Student ID card? <http://bit.ly/20MqbbZ> #disted."

Youtube

Getting charged up about convocation? Watch AU's [2014 Convocation Recap](#) for a taste of what's to come.



A Fresh Start

Deanna Roney



Sometimes when we start something new we need to change things in our immediate environment as well. While I am still waiting for final marks and my application to graduate to work its way through the system, I was struck with the notion that the study-space I previously loved needed a facelift. Not because it was not functional (it was—very,) but because I needed something that would symbolize a new beginning.

The room I had taken over for studying is not very big. And there is a lot of furniture squished into it which makes rearranging a little more difficult. But with a little (or a lot) of cursing and effort I was able to make some changes. I had to empty a few bookshelves, one to get a no-longer-needed-chair out the door, and one because I was moving it clear across the room (and I didn't think it would make the few feet with the weight of the books). I was also able to re-fluff the dog bed which has already been taken over by one of my monsters.

There is something about rearranging a few things that makes everything feel, well, right. I also went through this part way through studying. It felt amazing to have an organized space—even if it didn't last long. I am sure there is some technical reason why this is, perhaps it

triggers something in the brain to signify work, relaxation, or simply a desire to be in the room. Now I can sit and stare out my window without having to turn away from my screen. It's a distraction that would not have been well suited to a few of the courses I decided to take.

I have found when I get into a slump, or feel that I need to decompress, the best way to do it is to rearrange my immediate environment. Making a few changes can make it more enjoyable to be in, and the act of physically moving things can sometimes be all a person needs to recharge their mind. I found this as I studied and changed things around, and I also found it now. As my degree is coming to a close I needed to re-energize myself to a new pace and style of work. I also needed something to help signify the close of a chapter and beginning anew. Before, when I sat at my desk, I found my mind constantly wandering back to studying (was there something I was forgetting to do? An assignment that should be getting my attention instead?) While, of course, there wasn't, my mind was constantly in that mode. I had trained myself, though unconsciously, to get into the mode of work as soon as I sat at the desk. So now, I need to retrain myself, trigger myself, to get creative when I sit at my new work space.

Deanna Roney is an AU student who loves adventure in life and literature



Consider

Readers of this space won't be surprised to hear I love reading. When actually sitting down with a book, no matter if electronic or paper, isn't possible, the next best thing for me is listening to audio books. Because I refuse to pay full retail for them what ends up in my vehicle is always a reflection of what was available at my favourite thrift store or library discard sale.

Leaving those purchases to serendipity has turned out well. That's how I fell in love with Tami Hoag's mysteries. Or the strong female characters in Lisa Scottoline's books. Which then led to the books she's co-written with her daughter Francesca Serritella. It was hearing the lyrical cadence of Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* or James Lee Burke's *The Tin Roof Blowdown* that led me to those authors. The 50-CD set of Ayn Rand's 1957 *Atlas Shrugged* tested my staying power and made me admire the underlying premise of the book in the context of today's value system.

When I'm listening for sheer entertainment and escapism purposes there are no demands on me. I soak it all up.

When the material is non-fiction or memoir the stakes are raised. There's often a lesson to be learned or facts to be assimilated. So whether it's Joel Osteen or Deepak Chopra or Haven Kimmel I'm learning.

I just finished listening to Donald Miller's memoir *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years---What I Learned While Editing My Life*. Miller is a faith-based writer who had written a bestselling memoir *Blue Like Jazz*. Despite that success his life was stalling. He was sleeping all day, wasting money, struggling in his love life, and weighing about 400 pounds. Then he was approached by a couple of producers to turn his memoir into a movie. The process of turning his life into a screenplay was arduous. It made him realize that through action or inaction we each choose our own story. Through the writing process Miller realized his life was boring and without meaning.

Through working with his co-writers and a seminar with screenplay guru Robert McKee, Miller learned the art of story. And just as a written story needs to have robust characters, strong motivation, setbacks, challenges, and resolution, so too does a well-lived life. I took immense comfort in the notion that a life without challenges and problems is not a very compelling life (story). Otherwise we are sleepwalking through a flower-filled meadow of rainbows, butterflies, and unicorns. It's a snore fest. Anyone watching *that* movie would be walking out demanding a refund.

Miller re-evaluated the story of his life, got off the couch and began cycling across America. He started a mentoring project for boys growing up without fathers, as he had. He became a character (worthy of our time, attention, and caring) living a story worth watching.

If someone made a movie of our lives would it win an Academy award or go straight to the discount video bin? Are we living our best story or hoping to slip through unscathed? This audiobook forced me to consider my answers, from where I sit.

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



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Mood Swings

Dear Barb:

Hi, I have been with my boyfriend for five years. He suffers from bipolar disorder and, over the course of our relationship, has gotten worse. I love him a lot, but my life is consumed with his illness. Each day is dependent on how Gary feels. If he has a good day, then I have a good day and if it is a bad day for him, mine is too. I am in my early thirties and really want to have kids, but I can't imagine caring for a child with Gary being so unstable. My family and friends all tell me I should move on so I can have children before it's too late, but it's not that easy. It doesn't seem right to leave someone just because they are ill. If he had cancer I wouldn't leave him, why would I leave him now? On the other hand, I'm thinking maybe I should have a child, it might help Gary to get better. I really am confused, do you have any advice? Thanks, Cindy.

Hi Cindy:

You are definitely in a difficult situation. Deciding whether or not to leave a mentally ill person is undoubtedly very complicated. It is important that you are not enabling their mental illness, if you are, the person may never get better and this is not what you want. Often people believe that they are helping someone, when in reality they are hindering them. Is your boyfriend doing everything he can to help himself? Is he following doctor's instructions, taking his meds, eating properly, taking care of his body? If he is not, then he is not helping himself and you need to take a step back. I can't advise you what to do, but I can suggest that you both go for counseling, if he refuses, then go by yourself. You need to keep yourself healthy, as it's very easy to get pulled into someone else's illness and that

is not what you want. Your family doctor can refer you to a counselor in your area. Thanks for your question Cindy.

Dear Barb:

My boyfriend and I had been dating for two years. I thought everything was wonderful and he was the person I wanted to be with for the rest of my life. Things changed drastically when he told me he was attracted to another girl he is working with. I was heartbroken, shocked, devastated; I couldn't believe it! I still can't believe I didn't see this coming. Three months ago Jerry broke up with me and began dating this other girl. Since the breakup I have been having a hard time moving on because I still love him. Recently I heard that the relationship with the other girl didn't work out. I got a call from Jerry and he told me he wants to meet and talk about us getting back together. I agreed to meet, but I'm not sure if I would ever be able to trust him again, or even if should take a chance with him. What would you do? Thanks, Kristin.

Hey Kristin:

You are the only one who can decide what's right for you. Do you feel this was a one time thing and your boyfriend has come to realize you are the girl for him? Or he is just going back to you because it didn't work out with the other girl? Trust is a very valuable part of any relationship and once it's lost it's not that easy to get it back, but it's not impossible. Perhaps if you really want this to work, you could both go to couples counselling and try to get to the bottom of why your boyfriend decided to end your relationship and go with this other girl. His perspective of relationships may not be the same as yours and you need to find this out as soon as possible. Good Luck, Kristin.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

AGITATIN' BUNNY

IN: OCCUPY OFFSHORE

HEY, CAPTAIN UNDERGROUND, GUESS WHAT?



I'M GOING TO PANAMA TO TAKE PART IN OCCUPY OFFSHORE!

WOW! WAY TO FLOG A DEAD HORSE!



HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU TO JOIN THE PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTUALLY CREATING CHANGE IN THE WORLD?



WHAT COULD BE MORE WORLD-CHANGING THAN CAMPING ON A BEACH AND SINGING PROTEST SONGS? HOLD ON, I NEED TO BORROW SOME OF YOUR KAVA KAVA . . .

CAMPING ON A BEACH REQUIRES TENTS, FOOD, AND TOILET FACILITIES.



WHO'S GOING TO BE FOOTING THE BILL?



DUDE! NO WORRIES! JAYCEE CHAN HAS EVERYTHING COVERED!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



This space is provided free to AUSU: The Voice does not create this content. Contact services@ausu.org with questions or comments about this page.

Farewell to Outgoing Council!

AUSU would like to thank the outgoing council members for all of their hard work and dedication to AUSU and the students of Athabasca University. AUSU accomplished a lot over the past year with many new initiatives. We appreciate all the great work you have done!

The council changeover occurred during the April 14, 2016 council meeting.

Farewell to **Megan Daigneault, Colleen Doucette, Pierre Plamondon, Tamra Ross, and Laura Zhu**. We wish you success in all your future endeavors!

We extend the same appreciation to the four returning councillors, who will continue to bring their expertise and dedication to AUSU for the new council term – **Shawna Wasylyshyn, Brandon Simmons, Kim Newsome, and Philip Kirkbride**.

We also welcome aboard new council members **Josh Cross, Andrew Gray, Scott Jacobsen, Julian Teterenko, and Dixie Tolliver**.



IMPORTANT DATES

- **April 15:** May degree requirements deadline
- **April 29:** May course extension deadline
- **April 30:** Deadline to apply for 2016 Convocation
- **May 6:** Deadline to complete coursework for Convo'16
- **May 10:** Deadline to register in a course starting Jun 1
- **May 13:** June degree requirements deadline
- **May 31:** June course extension deadline

Get to know your new council!

Find out more about the nine elected AUSU councillors, who will represent AUSU members for the next 2 years.

Check out their biographies on our website [here](#).



Student Awards & Bursaries

Apply now – Deadline is May 1, 2016!

- **Academic Achievement Award** – for high achievers
- **AUSU Bursary** – for students in financial need
- **Balanced Student Award** - for student balancing multiple responsibilities
- **Returning Student Award** – for students returning after a break from studies
- **Student Services Award** – for student volunteers

Find out more or apply online [here](#).

Executive Blog

Check out the latest Executive Blog our website [here](#).



CLASSIFIEDS

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

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