



# THE VOICE

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**BEST OF 2017**



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

**Hey! Did you know the Voice Magazine has a Facebook page?**

No kidding! We also do the twitter thing once in a while if you're into that.

## Editorial

Karl Low

### It Says “Best Of” on the Cover for a Reason



It was a good year for *The Voice Magazine*. Not only did we get a brand new website that helps you find good things to read rather than fighting you every step of the way. We also gained a bunch of new writers near the end of the year, and kept most of the ones we started with as well. Plus, I personally received the honour of being given the Editor of the Year award by the Professional Writer's Association of Canada. That the Voice Writer's felt strong enough to nominate me, and were able to craft the words that brought The Voice Magazine the win (even without my editing, I should add) is, I think, a solid testament to the kind of people trying to create a great read for you every week.

With that in mind, we bring you The Best of The Voice Magazine for 2017, where I and a number of students (and others) have found articles they think exemplify the best of what The Voice Magazine is about.

These probably weren't the only picks that deserved to be in here, but I've already added a little bit of commentary after each article, letting you know why it was picked specifically.

So, without further ado, I bring you The Best of the Voice 2017.

You'll enjoy the read.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karl", with a stylized flourish at the end.



## I am AU

Barbara Lehtiniemi



In her January executive blog, AUSU president Shawna Wasylyshyn asks, "who are the students of AU?" In her capacity as student union council president, Wasylyshyn interacts with countless people in the post-secondary education community. Some, she feels, view AU students as "disadvantaged", "marginalized", or people with "no other choice" but to attend AU.

Like Wasylyshyn, I attend AU by choice. I am surrounded by several worthy universities: McGill, Concordia, Carleton, and the University of Ottawa are all a reasonable commute away. I was accepted by and registered to attend one of those institutions before deciding that AU was a better fit. Far from having no choice, I had my pick and I picked AU.

So, who am I? I'm a mature student—so mature that I'm the parent of a mature student. I've had several careers over my working life. Right now I work part time while I study at AU. I volunteer. I read. I travel. I write. I dream. I'm complex and unique.

As an AU student, I'm motivated. I'm responsible for my own timetable, my own deadlines, my own course in life. I'm independent. I'm focussed. I'm also a procrastinator. I get distracted. What keeps me going? My determination to succeed. My drive to meet my goals.

Am I a typical AU student? There's no such thing. You can analyze the statistics and find the average student but not one single student is average. AU students represent the widest possible demographic. We're everywhere. We're everyone. We're working; we're unemployed. We're successful; we're struggling. We're single, married, childless, grandparents—you name it and we are it. We are each complex and unique.

I have no idea who those people are who think AU students are disadvantaged or marginalized—although we can be that too. I've had the privilege of meeting and speaking with many AU students and we resist narrow definition. Wasylyshyn has met many more and finds AU students, "successful, intelligent, entrepreneurial, self-motivated, and driven toward success." It would be difficult to be an AU student without these qualities, yet these are only a small sampling of our attributes.

AU is great for a lot of reasons, and one of those reasons is that AU does not judge anyone. Anybody (over the age of 16) who wants to go to AU is accepted. That's exactly the kind of university I want to go to. If that means that some AU students are "disadvantaged" or "marginalized"—whatever that means—then I celebrate it. Everyone should have the same opportunity for education and AU makes that possible. Maybe some students have "no other

choice" but that's the whole point of an open university and doesn't diminish the decision of those who do.

So if someone wants to know who I am: I am AU. And you are, too.

*Want to share your thoughts on what defines us as AU students? Visit AUSU's [January executive blog](#) to post your comments.*

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

*[Barb wrote her suggestions to me for this year, and this article, from way back in our January 27, 2017 issue (2504) wasn't on the list. Instead she suggested her article [Editor of the Year, the Inside Scoop](#) be run as it rivaled the new website itself as The Biggest Thing to happen to the Voice this year. And while that was certainly a very cool thing for our little magazine, this article is, I think, a better representation of how The Voice Magazine, and AU, connect and matter to AU students. And come on, that ending? That's just a good read. -Ed.]*



# MEETING THE MINDS

## INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



*Dr. Neil Fassina is the 8<sup>th</sup> President of Athabasca University. He earned a BSc in Psychology from the University of Calgary and PhD in Management from the Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto. He is an active researcher in the areas around applied decision-making. He was installed in mid-January, 2017 and works to remain connected to the communities that he serves. AU is no different. This interview was conducted in late 2016 prior to being officially installed as the 8<sup>th</sup> president of AU.*

**To set some groundwork, what is your family background – culture, geography, and language?**

I am Canadian by birth. Born and raised in Calgary, I am a true bringing together of multiple backgrounds as a Canadian. I have some French Canadian. I have some East Coast in my family. I have some Polish. I have some Italian. It is a bringing together of European cultures. I grew up in an English household. My mother and father grew up in Montréal. So, while I love to claim we were a bilingual household, we were bilingual at certain moments in time, but I never claimed to be one of them.

It is one regret of childhood, not taking that side of the language, seriously. From there, when I started into my higher education, I did undergraduate at the University of Calgary in psychology. I moved out to Toronto from there to do doctoral work. I moved back to Calgary as a visiting assistant professor. I come from a dual academic family. My wife has her doctorate as well. From

there, we ended up in Winnipeg for just shy of 8 years at the University of Manitoba. We found our way back to Alberta into Edmonton. This time, I made my jump to Athabasca.

### **Before coming into AU, what was your image of the university?**

A little inside scoop of a process I was going through here. When I finally accepted the role, they said, "We made an observation. There's already a Neil Fassina in the system. We don't know why." I was a proctor for Athabasca University when I was at the University of Manitoba. So, I had an employee file in a way. There was a Neil Fassina in the system. Yet, there was only one Neil Fassina in Canada. So, it threw us for a loop. My image of Athabasca: it was a presence when I was at the University of Calgary. In that regard, my awareness of it as a learner was the same as visiting learners.

If you need find a course or two, and they aren't scheduled at your institution at the time, then you can go to Athabasca. Early on, in my academic career, it was from a more learner perspective. It was, "Wow! I can do that." Spending more time in Manitoba and Ontario, you change your lens moving into the administrative side of things. You begin to see the mandate of Athabasca more publicly. The impression of it, if I might be so bold coming back into the province 5 years ago, it was a university facing a great deal of opportunity, whether or not you looked at it as an institution bringing learning to the learner rather than the learner to the learning.

Or whether or not you looked at its online presence and the strategic risk the university took when it made the move to an online presence, it took years for more residential universities to catch up. It had the perspective of opportunities sitting in front of it. As time goes on, I heard very much the same things that all of Alberta began to hear with the challenges it was facing. It didn't necessarily align with the perceived opportunities of the university in my mind. I could see why there was opportunity and challenge there. When I became part of the process, I became more aware of the nuance of it. Before, my general perspective was of a unique concept with so much potential. The duality of that in relation to some public challenges that were there.

### **What was your first priority when you took the position?**

My main comment during the announcement process was to 'hit the ground listening.' That continues to be a priority. I am spending as much as I humanly can to listen to the Athabasca University community, whether face-to-face communication, over the phone communication, or some of the reports. Any information is a priority to me. Universities often share similar characteristics, but there's always nuances to each institution. It was important to me. It remains important to me how the different voices of Athabasca University come together to create the harmony of the university itself. What is its culture? Because it is the culture I am getting myself into, I am realizing that everything has to be done within that culture.

### **Speaking of listening to people and reading the reports, with the information you have so far, what do you see as the general perspective of the faculty of the university? Both its pluses and minuses.**

That's a great question. If I had to pin down some broad perspectives, to a person, there is an unbelievable commitment to the learners of AU. There's a commitment to the mandate of AU and the ability to create that open, flexible, and accessible environment. There is a commitment to excellence at every corner in always wanting to make sure the learning opportunity we're creating is the highest quality, and the research we're doing is the highest quality. If I had to pinpoint a couple perspectives on the general perspective, those would be some of the strong points.



**What about those in other administrative or leadership roles such as chairs or heads of faculty, deans, and associate deans, and so on?**

There's a recognition that there are obviously challenges there. I don't think anyone is shying away from the fact that there are challenges. If I had to put the perspective on some of the voices that I heard, there is a commitment to reinvigorate around the academic mission of Athabasca University. At the same time, the attempt to find our path to a balanced point through some of our challenges, and always wanting to make sure we're pointing in the direction of our next vision. It is similar to the comment on the faculty voices. It is a commitment to our vision and what our role is, and focusing on what's possible and recognizing what we need to do to get there. So, as we start to look through some of the decision frameworks to overcome the challenges, we want to make sure we're purposeful in the decisions. So, they're moving into something else as well. It is the duality. Also, it is making the right decisions to move us into that future as well.

**And students? Both groups such as AUSU and AUGSA, and of course the students themselves? What are you hearing is their perspective on the institution?**

From the undergraduate and graduate student perspective, I am hearing things come back to the role of Athabasca University. They need to create that flexible opportunity. The students want to be committed to the future of this institution and the future success of AU. They want to make sure their learning opportunities continue. They want to make learning opportunities for our learners of today and learners of tomorrow too.

**I had this pointed out in discussion with interim president of AU, Peter MacKinnon. We discussed some of the 2010/11 statistics about the undergraduate student body of AU. Some were that 2/3 of students are women with the average age being 28-29, and about 3/10 having dependents. Do you think we've tapped into something for single parents - the majority of which are single mothers – in terms of the ease of access to education through digital technology?**

You know what, Scott, I am going to agree with you, and build on it. One step further, it comes back to the mission. Absolutely, we've taken a role in the postsecondary environment. It is unlike traditional residential university roles. In that we enable the opportunity for people who cannot, or choose not, to learn at a traditional 'bricks-and-mortar' university. So, whether or not it be their life circumstance that disallows them to learn in that environment, or cannot give up their commitments in life, or the idea of the learning coming to them as an individual is better suited to their learning style and enables them to learn in their community to leverage the community as a learning resources.

That's a huge population, whether by choice or by circumstance, which AU provides a unique learning opportunity to be able to access the university-level education for that group of people. If I might be so bold, we talk about traditional learners within the system being the individuals that attend a traditional residential university, but I might venture that the majority of the adult learning population that fits into wanting the learning to come to them because they are in a life circumstance where it better suits their current environment. I think it's a huge piece in front of us.

*Look for Part 2 of this interview in next week's Voice Magazine.*

*Scott Douglas Jacobsen works with various organizations, and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.*

*[First appearing in our February 10th edition (issue 2506) this interview with Dr. Neil Fassina is a great introduction to the man who now helms Athabasca University. Know your enemy, as they say. (Kidding, of course) It's also useful if you're seeking hints as to where AU may be headed in the future. -Ed.]*





## Not All Who Wander Are Lost

Carla Knipe



A recent Facebook message sent by someone I went to high school with informed me that a group from our grad class was starting to plan our 30-year reunion. After reading it, I had two reactions. The first one was, "We are just not that old—seriously; weren't the 1980s just ten years ago?" and the second, "I'm really not sure if I should go." Not because I dread seeing my classmates again, but what I dread the most is all the bragging that seems a natural accompaniment to high school reunions. It shouldn't be such a big deal, right? After all, a person gets to the point in life that they are established in a career, have

a great partner and amazing kids, and have life pretty much figured out.

Or do they? I have a husband and son, whom I adore, and live in suburban Calgary. I've held down jobs and volunteered. But, deep down, I feel no further ahead in life than if I were in my early 20s. I am still in university, and the secret that I don't tend to admit in polite company is that I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up. This isn't a mid-life crisis in the traditional sense, because I've had this crisis in confidence for a long time. But during my adulthood, I've had periods of depression/panic/despair that stem from the fear that perhaps I will always be behind the pack, and that I don't measure up how life is *supposed* to be.

However, now that I've reached my mid-life years, I ironically find that I can relax a bit. Being 40-something has come with a sense of wisdom and peace about who I am and being an "adult learner" has been a gift for me in terms of realizing that I am just not done yet--and, in fact, I am only just getting started. Rather than labelling myself as a failure because of what I have not accomplished, I am learning to notice and appreciate what I have attained. I am proud to call myself a late bloomer.

The general definition of a late bloomer is someone reaches certain milestones later than their peers and later than the norms of society. But, although this definition is handy, defining exactly what it entails is a bit more difficult. The usual patterns of graduating high school, entering some form of post-secondary education, finding gainful employment, and settling down to start a family, along with the expectation of what should be accomplished and when, is shifting--for the better. Although there will always be those that accomplish a huge amount while they are young, no longer is a person considered a has-been if they haven't achieved all they wanted to by the time they reach some magic milestone (perhaps the age of 40—or is it even 30?). This may be due to many factors, including that people are living longer and that societal attitudes toward aging are changing. But a shift in mindset within society is also occurring. One that sends the message that people can change and adapt. After all, a lot of people often find themselves in a place that requires them to start over in life, perhaps due to a traumatic event—such as losing a home or business because of financial reasons, or finding themselves coping with a personal loss such as a death or divorce.

And yet, often those who identify with the label of a late bloomer still feel a little ashamed that they are a late starter. They still may wonder if and how they will ever fit in. Resources to help late bloomers thrive are difficult to seek out and often scant. But late bloomers are resilient; they use their determination to live life on their own terms, instead of those others expect of them, often in a way that non- late bloomers do not.

Michelle Despain used her experiences to create the website [The Late Bloomer Revolution](#) and she has also authored the book *The Late Bloomer's Almanac*. She does not view being a late bloomer as a negative label; rather, she affirms that anyone who dares to live life on their own terms in mid-life and beyond should be celebrated. She calls these people "late bloomer revolutionaries." However she notes that the biggest obstacle in finding one's true potential is negative and defeatist thinking. She urges late bloomers to learn from and honour their past but to not get bogged down in it. Instead, she says, thinking positive and learning to dream again—but also following up those dreams with action—are the way that late bloomers can move forward and find their niche.

Debra Eve is another writer who is encouraging late bloomers through her website, [The Later Bloomer](#). She recognizes that many creative people throughout history do not begin to find success until their later years. She also notes that often late bloomers have experienced some sort of trauma in their early life that they must overcome, but then they use their negative experiences, along with a sense of curiosity and wonder, to create their own goals and definition of success.

Of course, this comes as no surprise for Athabasca University students. Perhaps the alternate name for AU should be Late Bloomer University, because many of its students have overcome all kinds of difficulties to embrace their chance at learning. AU's Office of the Registrar provided the most recent demographic numbers for AU undergraduate student age groups, which breaks down as follows:

Less than age 25 - 47.4%

25 to 34 - 33.0%

35 to 44 - 14.1%

45 to 54 - 4.7%

55 + - 0.8%

## A Few Famous Late Bloomers

### Harlan David Sanders

Colonel Sanders founded the Kentucky Fried Chicken company at age 65, and went on to become a multimillionaire.

### Grandma Moses

Anna Mary Robertson Moses was a happy, long-time embroiderer until arthritis made that painful and difficult. Instead of the needles, she took up the paint brush at the age of 75, in 1935.

### Kenneth Grahame

Although he had written for publication previously, Grahame's primary career was with the Bank of England. *The Wind in the Willows* marked the true breakthrough in Grahame's writing but it was turned down by almost every publisher it was sent to. Grahame finally found publishing success when he was 49.

### Julia Child

Chef, Julia Child, had several careers but didn't learn how to cook until her 40s. She didn't have her television show on public television until her 50s.

### Alfred Hitchcock

He had some success as a filmmaker in his early life but he made his most famous films, including *Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window* and *Psycho*, between the ages of 54 and 61.

### Susan Boyle

The story behind her music is more famous than the music she sings. At age 47, this shy and unassuming lady won over both the cynical judges and audience members of the television show *Britain's Got Talent*. Since then, she has released six albums and was nominated for two Grammy Awards™ but still lives in the same house she did before she was famous.

The Registrar's office says that, generally, these numbers do not fluctuate much from year to year and notes that AU has a high percentage of adult learners, far more than traditional universities.

However, the nature of AU's distance learning format, which opens learning opportunities for late bloomers, also has one disadvantage. It is often difficult for late bloomers to contact each other for support. Hopefully, new opportunities will open up for them to do. But in the absence of organized meetups for students to get together in person, *The Voice*, as well as AU's and AUSU's Facebook pages, are crucial communication forums for students to reach out to each other. Late bloomers, no matter where they come from and whatever they face in life, need to stand up and be proud of all they have overcome and are on the way to achieving.

As for my high school reunion? Who knows what will happen in the next little while. I just may show up.

*Carla might consider herself a late bloomer, but hopefully this label will not apply to her efforts at creating her first garden in her new house this year.*

*[Once you've read this there should be no questions why it's part of The Best of the Voice. It looks at a connection many of AU's students may have that might, at first glance, seem like a negative and turns it around. It does that while giving us information both about AU and the nature of that connection that we may not have known, presents a call to action for those people, and then wraps it all up in the very real experience of a student dealing with it on her own, as so many of us must. Where else would it be but in the Best of? -Ed.]*

## A Man's Legacy

Barbara Godin



The legacy a man leaves for his children is precious. It took many years for me to heal the scars left from damaging father figures. Despite the negatives, life always provides us with a counteracting positive, if we only allow ourselves to see it.

Each man in my life has taught me something about life—some good, some not so good—beginning with my biological father. When I think about my dad I feel love, and loss, both at the same time. Dad was a reserved Englishman who rarely showed affection to any of his four children. He was a heavy drinker. I don't really recall him being drunk or doing anything irrational, but that's not to say he didn't—I just didn't see it. I loved the

part of him where I could see reflections of myself, and I knew we were a part of each other. For example, we both had a short big toe, an inherited condition called Morton's Syndrome.

My parents divorced when I was a year and a half old, so my father was in and out of my life. I lived with him for a short time and I have only good memories of that time. But along with the good memories there is emptiness, as I don't feel I really knew him. The best word to describe my feelings for my dad was "composed." There was nothing intense, and I didn't miss him when I didn't see him. When I visited, we just sat together, exchanging few words. He didn't attend my wedding. And that was okay with me.



I learned from my dad that you can love someone just because of the place they hold in your life.

After my parents separated, Mom met Ray, a convicted rapist, in a bar and brought him into her children's lives. He was a man that you could easily describe as "creepy." He barely talked above a whisper and had a sinister laugh, which always made me feel as if I had done something awful. He did terrible things to my sister, things that she never was able to get over, things that you only read about in books. I will always remember that the dark green blinds in our house were kept tightly closed, as Ray was always fearful someone was after him. He systematically forced my mother to choose between him and her children, and, for the most part, she chose him. However, for some reason, he seemed to like me. At the time I was happy that I was able to stay with mom, I loved her so much. Up until that point she was the constant in my life. But as mom and Ray's relationship deteriorated, and the fighting escalated, I began to wish I was somewhere else. Their relationship was filled with fighting and horrible name calling and the police were constantly at our door. Ray's uncle and his wife, who had no children, began taking me to their place for weekends. As my life was becoming filled with fear I looked forward to going to the Martin's.

Ray taught me that sometimes it's easier to just play the game.

My weekend visits to the Martin's eventually tuned into year-long visits. At first, I liked it there; it was quiet and everything seemed normal like other kids homes, but things changed. Betty Martin was a harsh, strict woman who always seemed to have health problems and spent most of her time lying on the sofa. I tried to get along with her, but I felt such anger toward her because she was trying to be a mother to me, and I already had a mother. Often Henry stepped in and tried to smooth things over. He was very nice to me and took me everywhere with him. He was the father figure I missed and he became like a real dad to me. I loved him and I believed he loved me. But very quickly his vision of love became twisted and sick, and every day I just wished I could leave there.

He taught me not to trust, as people are often not who they appear to be.

As soon as I was able to, I moved out on my own. I met and married my first husband. We were two dysfunctional teenagers, trying to escape unhappy homes. We had not finished high school and were working at minimum wage jobs, which inevitably led to financial stress. When our daughter was born the stress only escalated. We argued constantly about everything. However, we had some happy times with our daughter. As things became more intense, drugs and abuse caused me to take my daughter and escape.

From my first husband I learned that no one else can make you whole, it has to come from within.

My second husband was my lifeline. He restored my faith in men. He loved me unconditionally and always assured me that everything would be fine. He took care of my every need. It was as if his whole purpose in life was to make me happy. At first I found it difficult to accept that life really can be this happy and people can be trusted. I relentlessly tested Ed to make sure he wasn't going to be like the other men in my life, and he never crumbled. We experienced the normal ups and downs that couples go through, but, our life was largely bliss. I thought my life would always be like that until the fateful day when cancer entered our lives.

One year later my dream was over and life was forever changed. My heart was broken. All the pain from the past flooded forward. It took a long time to be able to feel past the pain and see the precious gift I had been given.

Ed taught me that I am loveable and worthy of being loved.

I truly believed Ed was the last man who would be a part of my life, until I met Stan. He had also lost this wife, and through our shared grief we began a relationship. Stan and I healed our grief together and could understand and share the deep pain of losing a loved one. Although Stan grew up without a father, he overcame and was a truly amazing father to his sons.

Stan showed me, and continues to show me, the true meaning of the word father.

*Barbara Godin is a graduate of AU and writes the "Dear Barb" column. She lives in London, Ontario with her husband, two dogs, and one cat. She can be reached on twitter @BarbGod*

*[First published in our August 18, 2017 edition, this article got a couple of votes, and I couldn't agree more. Often the writing that touches us most is that which exposes the writer. This is no exception to that rule. -Ed.]*



## The Creative Spark! Itty-Bitty Lightbulbs

Marie Well



Does wisdom expire? Well, some words of wisdom go cliché—like worn-out metaphors. For instance, I sigh when I read how leaders should act as servants. I nod-off when I read the 80-20 rule. There's nothing new in either.

But some wisdom we can't escape. Consider the guilt felt when we fall behind in courses. Or the guilt felt when we say unkind words. Naturally, we cringe when we break Golden Rules.

And certain wisdom never fades. A colleague had cancer and sought meaning—philosophical, not spiritual meaning. My advice? Don't get dazzled by the wisdom in Wonder Woman; read the Buddhist 8-fold path instead.

The Buddhist 8-fold path lists rules that cross-over many faiths. The 8-fold path talks about right action, right speech, right mindset, right livelihood, right effort, right conduct, right thought, and right view. Break what's right, and you'll squirm.

But can you craft new wisdom? Yes, use wild metaphors that upend beliefs. As an example of a new metaphor, one book points to a middle ground between master and jack-of-all-trades (*How to Be Everything: A Guide for Those Who (Still) Don't Know What They Want* by Emilie Wapnick). Another book makes a bee-otch an object of desire (*Why Men Marry Bitches: A Guide for Women who are too Nice* by Sherry Argov). Still others say to slow down life to speed up success.

If your metaphor has the F-word, place that bomb in a book title. Bookstores will feature your profanity on prime display. And if your metaphor rhymes, you'll delight the world. "Fake it 'til you make it" sparked hope with many high school grads. When I asked a student stylist her hair-dressing dreams, she said, "Fake it 'til you make it." Then she splatted color on my scalp.

But remember that no matter how catchy the metaphor, wisdom is making a moral argument. John Truby shows how to make a moral argument in his book *The Anatomy of Story: 22 Steps to Becoming a Master Storyteller*:

- Make your story have actions tied to moral implications. Bundle these moral or immoral actions into a larger theme.
- Theme is not so much big ideas like good versus bad; "theme is the author's view of how to act in the world" (p. 108). *You* set the code of the right way to behave.
- But don't go overboard with preaching. Instead, let consequences dictate what counts as right action.
- Also, stuff your theme into a single sentence. Your theme could say, "Intimate love lasts when rooted in values."
- Then, zero in on how your hero's actions harm others. This is the moral starting point. As an example, start with a hero's criminal behavior destroying his true love. Then end with hero's realization of the opposite moral: "Intimate love lasts when rooted in values."
- And show how your hero makes amends.
- Or assign each character a different take on the theme. Consider the theme, "Intimate love lasts when rooted in values." The first character, the hero, harms his true love with his criminal behavior. The second character can't commit to a promising relationship because of his false desire for an ex. The third character desperately buys love. For all these characters, make the moral action come back to the theme: "Intimate love lasts when rooted in values."
- Or have the hero's and the enemy's values conflict. "Remember, values are deep-seated beliefs about what makes a good life" (p. 117). Give the hero and villain lots of opposing values. Grind these values together in the hero's quest for the goal.

In stories, you act as God, laying down right ways to behave. So, draw wisdom from life-lessons, from values, or from twists in metaphors.

Wisdom can also come from itty-bitty lightbulbs. Author Mel Robbins counted down from 5 to 1 to get out of bed. She turned that flash into a book: *The 5 Second Rule: Transform Your Life, Work, and Confidence with Everyday Courage*. Call it a creative spark!

*[From the September 29, 2017 issue (2538), this article was chosen not just for how it lays out straight forward advice for creating something new, but also as a reminder that simply adhering old wisdom may not be appropriate if you're interpreting for your circumstances, such as ruining a person's hair. Using humour to bring home the lessons of advice? That's part of what the Voice Magazine is all about, we strive to entertain while we inform. -Ed.]*



## University: Teaching or Indoctrinating? The Debate Sparked by Wilfrid Laurier

Jaclyn van Beek



University students, why are you pursuing a higher education? For most of us, the answer is simple: we want to gain the skills required to get good jobs in our chosen fields of expertise. We go to school so we can reach our full potential and achieve our goals. Since we've been sentient, we've been asked what career path we want to pursue. Maybe you looked up at your mom or your kindergarten teacher with your wide, wondering eyes and answered that you wanted to be a firefighter, a lawyer, a doctor, an indoctrinated sycophant for a postmodern, neo-Marxist ideology—wait, no, probably not that one. Too bad, as some



university administrations seem to want nothing more than to send you out the door with your shiny new Master's Degree in groupthink.

One such university, it appears, is Ontario's own Wilfred Laurier University. The administration of Wilfred Laurier has come under fire from free-speech advocates (read: a group of people that should include all people but unfortunately does not) for reprimanding 22-year-old teaching assistant, Lindsay Shepherd. Lindsay's crime? Exposing her first-year Communications Studies students to an excerpt from a video debate between University of Toronto psychology professor Dr. Jordan Peterson and another lecturer. The debate was centered on the then-proposed Bill C-16 and the use of non-binary gender pronouns in general (the use of pronouns like "they" or "ze" to refer to a single, non-traditional trans person). Professor Peterson has gained nationwide infamy in the past year for posting several controversial YouTube videos expressing his concerns about the far-reaching implications of what he considers the criminalization of pronoun misuse. The bill was passed last June and is now law.

Shepherd secretly recorded her meeting with her supervising professor, which the National Post reported, culminated in several censorious measures, including requiring her to hand in her lesson plans to her superior for review and the potential for in-class supervision. The recording is telling. In it, Shepherd is told that she was "promoting violence against trans persons" and "creating an unsafe learning environment" by simply showing her students the video without first prefacing Dr. Peterson's perspectives as "problematic". It appears to be entirely uncontested that she showed the clip for the purposes of promoting a healthy discussion and to fairly present both sides of a controversial issue, but this was of no consequence to her accusers. At one point, her supervisor even states that Shepherd's efforts to stay politically neutral were "kind of the problem" and compares doing so with presenting the views of Adolf Hitler in a neutral fashion. As if that's not the most wildly hysterical and intellectually lazy comparison of all time.

Without some clarification, I expect I'd be inundated with diatribes about the importance of being sensitive to the unique plight of trans folks. Before that happens, consider this: any position on gender expression and the use of non-traditional pronouns is irrelevant to the more central debate around campus censorship and indoctrination. There is no reason why the protection of free speech should be a partisan issue.

Your time in university should be rife with debate, exposure to new ideas and opportunities to develop critical thinking skills. This woman made no effort to defend Dr. Peterson, and she said multiple times in her interview that she disagrees with his perspective—she merely wanted to present both sides of a contentious social issue without bias and allow her students to analyze each argument on its merits. Well-intentioned or otherwise, her supervising professor effectively punished Shepherd for refusing to treat students like infants who must be spoon-fed the "right ideas" because they don't yet have the intellectual "toolkit" to reason their way through a sophisticated argument. Shepherd is right when she says that shielding students from certain perspectives to protect their fragile sensibilities is antithetical to the purpose of higher learning; you should leave university with the skills to orient yourself in a world full of people that won't always agree with you.

Lindsay's story is a success story. Her courage in defending herself and the purpose of a quality university education is being recognized by respected figures in media and academia nationwide and has resulted in apology letters from both the Laurier President and her supervising professor, although I think the need for damage control measures after the considerable media blow-back

casts reasonable doubt on their sincerity. It is fortunate that Lindsay had the presence of mind to record the encounter, or her academic credibility might now be questioned. Be like Lindsay. Fight the indoctrination and expose it when it rears its ugly head. Hold your administrators to a high standard and, together, let's ensure that this "soft bigotry of low expectations" has no place in our post-secondary institutions.

*Christian, conservative, Canadian – in that order. Follow me on Twitter @jaclynvanbeek.*

*[With recommendations from both students and non, this article from December 1 (issue 2547) this article was an easy include. It touches on many issues central to post-secondary education and points out the clash between the awareness of freedom of speech and debate and maintaining an awareness of oppression and power differentials within both society and university community itself. -Ed.]*



# MINDS WE MEET



*Foteini Evangelidou has recently completed the Master of Education in Distance Education program at AU. She currently resides in Kavala, a small beautiful city in Northern Greece that offers both the residents and visitors a combination of modern life with archaeological and historical sightseeing amidst the natural tranquility of sea and mountains. Named after both her maternal and paternal grandmothers, Foteini's name comes from the Greek word "fos" which means light. Her passion for Academics and Technology is sure to help brighten many minds in the future.*

## **What has your post-secondary journey looked like?**

I graduated from *1ο Γενικό Λύκειο Καβάλας* (the 1st senior high school of Kavala) in 2009 and succeeded in the Pan-Hellenic entrance examinations to the University. Specifically, in 2013 I acquired a bachelor's degree in Faculty of Education of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with the direction of School of Primary Education.

## **What has been the hardest part about studying online in Canada from Greece?**

Honestly, I faced no difficulties with the program itself studying by distance. The hardest part would be my personal busy schedule, including job and housekeeping. I was obsessed with my studies, I loved studying and I wish I had more hours available for studying. Because of my desire to do my best in my studies and due to my everyday obligations, I was always studying late into the night over the past two years. However, I never allowed tiredness to slow me down. On the contrary, I dug my heels in and left no chance to allow external factors to prohibit my studying or my strong yearning to achieve my personal learning goals.

### **What has been your favourite AU course?**

This is a difficult question to answer. Each of MDDE courses are special to me. However, if I need to choose one, I would say that Instructional Design in Distance Education (MDDE604) was the most beneficial and complete course. The course is totally devoted to instructional design (ID) principles and provided a great opportunity for us to develop a unit of instruction based on the theory of ID. The creation of the instructional unit was demanding, but a very interesting and beneficial task.

### **Why did you choose AU?**

When I ended my first year of undergraduate studies, I came across a textbook of Professor Dr. Tsinakos about his course “Distance Education” in the department of Computer Engineering of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Institute of Technology (EMATTECH). My studies in the field of primary education made me interested in whatever deals with the field of education and learning. So, the title, *Distance Education*, of that textbook attracted my interest and I read it carefully in only one day. I was just absorbed! From that moment, distance education was in my future studies-plan. In the last year of my undergraduate studies, I found the master’s program in Distance Education of Athabasca University. I was enchanted and I registered. There was no other master’s program in Greece with specialization in distance education. That was the reason behind the selection of the particular program. Moreover, combining the topic of the master’s degree with the flexible nature of Athabasca University, AU was a unique opportunity for me to study my field of interest without time or place restrictions.

### **What was the last movie you watched?**

The last movie I watched was *Life of Pi*. Even though the release date of the movie was 2012, I watched it a week ago. It’s undoubtedly very interesting and worth watching. The metaphoric implications are wise and it demands your mind and concentration while watching. *Life of Pi* is by no means a light movie.

### **What is the number one reason someone should vacation in Greece?**

Greek history, of course. It is an undeniable fact that Greek civilization is not only beautiful, but also formed the basis for other civilizations all over the world. Ancient buildings, sculptures, churches, manuscripts written in Ancient Greek Language, and objects are dispersed all over the country—either protected in museums or located outdoors. No visitor should miss Acropolis and Parthenon in Athens, as well as Knossos in Crete Island. My city, Kavala, has plethora of historical monuments too. Besides history, sun, sea, hospitality, and tasty food form the identity of Greece. Olive oil, nuts, fresh fishes, and Greek Yoghurt are some of the most nutritious and delicious Greek products that each visitor should taste.

### **What is your dream job?**

The M.Ed. in Distance Education constituted a strong inspiration for my future plans, concerning my academic and professional desires. First of all, I want to continue my studies with a doctorate in the field of distance education and the affordances of mobile or blended learning in education. These areas are not very famous in Greece and currently they are not applied in primary education. Because of my first degree in primary education, I would like to devote my doctorate to both sciences taking advantage of the innovative character of this master’s program. Furthermore, I am stimulated to implement personal research on the field of distance education and contribute the adaption of online learning in Greek educational contexts. Briefly, I would say that my dream job is to become an academic and researcher combining the fields of education



and technology. Recently I accepted a position as a researcher at Advanced Educational Technologies & Mobile Applications (AETMA) Lab at Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Institute of Technology. I am honoured and excited as this gives me the chance to not only use the knowledge and skills I gained from the M.Ed in Distance Education program, but also participate in innovative projects.

### What kind of music do you like to listen to?

Rock music is what I prefer to listen to! I love Radiohead, Madrugada, Placebo, and Offspring. But, while I am working or studying I love listening to a particular playlist on YouTube, the Disney Piano Collection. I am obsessed with Animation Disney Movies and I adore their soundtracks. The particular playlist is relaxing and helps me to stay concentrated and focused on my tasks.

### What super power would you like to have?

I would like to be a time-traveler! I would like to have the power to travel back in the past, from the ancient years to the recent past! This would give me the opportunity to see how primitive people live, to observe the dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals, to meet meaningful personalities, such as Socrates and Plato, to have some more moments with my mom that I missed at a young age.

### Do you have a favorite sport?

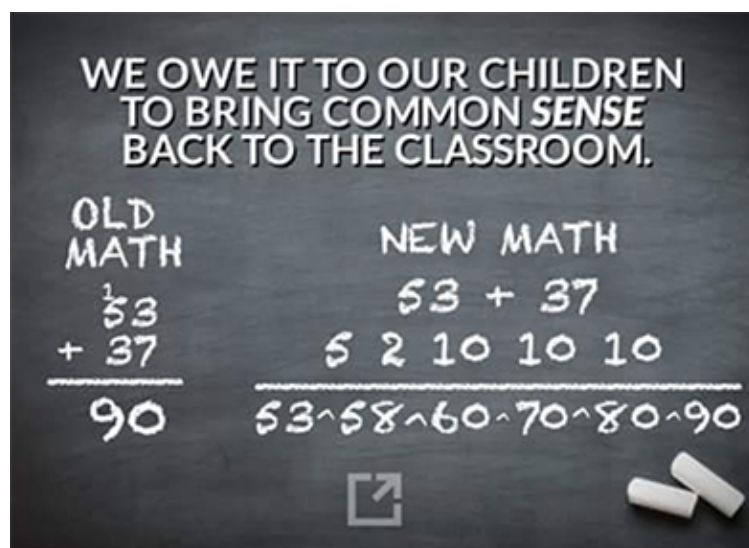
Generally I prefer individual sports rather than team sports. I find sports like athletics or gymnastics very interesting, because each athlete has to break their personal record. It seems like a bet on their personality. I think that I prefer this kind of sports because they remind me of myself. I always bet on myself and I always want to break my "records" and become continually better!

*Laura Nelson is a marketing analyst by day and a bibliophile by night. She is in her final stages of completing her BA with a major in English through AU.*

*[It wouldn't be a Best of the Voice Magazine without a student interview. I chose this one from among those recommended because it shows, in one article, the heights AU students can reach for, the breadth of their back-grounds, and how, in some ways, we're all alike no matter where we're from. I think getting all that into one article means it deserves its spot here, don't you? -Ed.]*

## The Debate around Math Education Doesn't Add Up

Carla Knipe



The new school year is in full swing and kids are delving into another year of "reading, writing, and 'rithmetic". But the sense of optimism for a new school year is overshadowed by the growing voice of those who question the quality of children's education. The K-12 curriculum and the teachers who deliver it are under increasing pressure to deliver student success amid squeezed education budgets and the increasing complexity of the modern classroom.

This is not inherently bad. Anyone who has an interest in education will agree that providing

kids the best opportunity of success for all students will serve their futures well. But the overall climate of Canadian schools is that the curriculum is becoming a politicized battleground. Parents demand that teachers produce tangible evidence of improvement and success in student test scores. They are doing this not via one-on-one discussions at parent teacher conferences, but by public activism and advocacy played out in the media.

Then politicians enter the fray by declaring that the current system is broken and they promise the ultimate solution to fix it. Right now, school districts across Alberta are holding elections for school board trustees. In many of them, from rural areas to the largest boards located in Calgary and Edmonton, the state of education standards are being scrutinized like never before and are a main election issue. The main focus of this scrutiny is whether inquiry-based learning, also called discovery learning, is to blame for the current woes in education and should be abolished in favour of a traditional, back to basics, no-nonsense education model.

And what is school subject that is the focus of the most scrutiny? It's math. Numeracy and having solid skills in mathematics, starting from the earliest elementary years, is becoming the benchmark for measuring whether kids are receiving a quality education.

But trying to make sense of the current curriculum debate is not easy, especially when it comes to backing up opinions with solid research. News headlines scream that kids are being failed by the "dumbed down" education system. And what about the kids who are left struggling with coming to grips with essential skills? Parents are left with either the choice to let kids flounder, or to fork out substantial sums on tutors or at privately run, franchised "learning centres" to boost their skills. So why does math matter so much--while literacy skills seem to be ignored--and why is the debate surrounding numeracy so heated? Is math really so important when looking at the whole picture of education, and do the numbers about math that reflect a poor education system really add up?

It is difficult to know what to believe because each side dredges up statistics to support their arguments. But this doesn't answer the question as to why math in schools has become such a heated focus. The scrutiny may be because numbers are easily quantifiable. Literacy has building blocks such as vocabulary and phonics, but beyond that, much of literacy is relatively abstract and contains a lot of subjectivity. There can be many ways to interpret a work of literature, for example. On the other hand, math is, well, math. It involves indisputable facts where there is only one possible right answer and a predictable formula for reaching that answer. There aren't really any philosophical discussions about math in childhood education like there are in literature. This is why math is easy to pick apart; either the answer is right, or it's wrong. Simple as that. Plus, the general trend in education--and society as a whole--has been to emphasize the importance of STEM subjects. Math and Science-based subjects, the argument goes, will lead to careers that will get people ahead in our technologically-based world. The ability to write essays or philosophize about literature, presumably then, will not.

But math is a problematic subject. Ask your colleagues and friends whether they enjoyed math in school, and the responses are more likely to be that math is the subject they hated most, or that they just weren't good at it—that they "just couldn't do math"—rather than it being a subject they loved. The inclusion of inquiry-based learning has been blamed for declining standards, but it has entered the curriculum precisely to engage more students and get them to like math. Hence the increased use of "discovery" or "common core" math—which, critics say, has absolutely no place in education as there is nothing about math that lends itself to discovery and discussion, so the use of these methods only creates confusion and frustration in students who don't have the capacity for philosophical reasoning. They see inquiry-based learning as a waste of taxpayer

dollars and liken it to the disastrous equivalent "experiment" of whole-language curriculum during the 1980s and 90s that left many students with lasting difficulties in reading and writing.

Multitudes of news reports continue to scream out attention-grabbing headlines that call for a "Math Revolution" or point to a steady downward slope of test scores and sloppy pedagogy without offering solutions. The game of ping-pong played by education professionals and government officials leaves parents caught in the middle and they often don't know who is telling the truth about what is going on. They also feel that when they do express their opinions, they get rebuffed. The result is that their only recourse is to turn to the media to pressure policy makers into fixing the curriculum, math in particular.

One high profile example is an Alberta-based campaign by Dr. Nhung Tran-Davjes, who was concerned enough about the poor math education her children were receiving to start a petition on change.org that has now gathered thousands of signatures. It calls for widespread reform to the math curriculum. Dr. Tran-Davies has been a visible spokesperson for the Back-to-Basics movement in the media, and has also met with elected officials to press for change. The campaign has also called for tightening standards in universities' faculties of education for teachers in training.

But beyond these campaigns, what statistics are there to suggest that numeracy standards are in freefall in Canada? The biggest report that Canadian proponents of back-to-basics numeracy point to in their arguments is a study by the C.D. Howe Institute, "What to Do About Canada's Declining Math Scores," authored by University of Winnipeg professor Anna Stokke, and one that is widely quoted from. The case is laid out that the trend in all provinces is that math scores show a steady decline, which is particularly documented in provinces like Ontario and Alberta that use standardized testing to track student progress. The report calls for immediate and significant reform of the way numeracy skills are taught; otherwise, Canada will be at a huge disadvantage compared to other countries, particularly Asian nations. But other than the evidence presented in the Stokke report, the debate around math education seems to be largely anecdotal, citing students who are unable to perform simple sums in their heads, who don't know the multiplication tables by heart, or who can't figure out how to make change in a shop without the aid of an electronic device. Proponents of the "back to basics" movement look to the Asian system as the epitome of how an education system should operate, and urges the Western system to adopt their methodologies.

However, what is missing in the Great Math Debate is some balance. What isn't talked about much is the other side, where educators are trying to engage students in developing an innate sense of numeracy that goes beyond rote memorization of facts and algorithms, or students who "get" math in a way they hadn't previously because of the shift in teaching methods. Could poor teaching and a lack of understanding of the process behind the pedagogy—in other words, the traditional, fact-based curriculum that math reformers advocate—be to blame for people hating math, despite the importance and necessity of it in our world? And is the Asian education system really the "perfect" system that North America should be striving toward?

What is also overlooked is that the practice of inquiry-based learning is often far different from the perception of it, especially where math is concerned. Math isn't just about the ability to recite facts. It also involves hands on exploration, critical thinking, reasoning, and problem solving. Memorizing math facts doesn't necessarily mean understanding, just as spelling bees don't measure an ability to write eloquent essays.

Perhaps, despite all the rhetoric, this debate is just a starting point. Hopefully, in the coming decades, there will be an understanding of numeracy and math education that we have not had previously, based on the realization that people are wired to learn math in different ways, in the



same way that people are wired with different learning styles in general. Perhaps this will lead to an approach to numeracy that will benefit all learners, not just those who are naturally inclined to be good at numbers.

But in the short term, what is guaranteed about math education is that the polarizing debate continues; in school parent council meetings, among school boards and governments—not to mention in the media and on social media. The attention-grabbing headlines will continue to give the illusion that the issues are cut and dry. But without the in-depth and balanced reporting about what is really happening in schools and the inclusion of verifiable, academic studies and balanced discussion, the positives about current math education will be displaced in favour of the negatives. And those at the heart of it all; the teachers, students, and parents, will be left to wonder whether the current education system is really failing.

*Carla is a Calgary writer who showed an early talent for words, not numbers. To make up for the shortfall, she married a guy who was good at math. Say "hi" to her on Twitter @LunchBuster.*

*[This is a great example, from our October 10th edition (issue 2540), of some of the investigative writing that The Voice Magazine receives that's neither AU nor post-secondary related, but still can connect with a number of AU students. Enough to make me take notice and put it in our Best of issue, at any rate! -Ed.]*



## I've Decided to Plant Explosives in Quebec

**Wanda Waterman**



January 30, 2017: Montreal vigil to commemorate the victims of the Quebec City mosque massacre. (Wanda Waterman photo)

This spring I'm going to be planting a small bundle of explosives near my home in Montreal, Quebec. I'll be burying them in the soil at Dante Park, where I often go to sit on a bench, drink a thermos of tea, and talk to my good buddy, the bust of Dante.

I've been a pacifist all my life. I've read just enough history to know that you can't make peace with a bomb. But I feel like I have to do this, like the balance of the world is way out of whack and I have to make this gesture to prove to myself that at the very least, I'm not a part of the cruel chaos we're drowning in.

I don't claim this to be a rational decision. But the time for reason is past

and now we must act, like the Weather Underground and like those theologians in Germany who tried to assassinate Hitler. We reach a point where we realise that all the dialogue and understanding in the world won't stanch this deadly tide so we must as well add our own two cents worth. Like seeds in a pod, we'll explode whether or not we choose to.

I guess what pushed me over the edge was seeing the photo of the children playing upstairs in the mosque in Quebec City just before the gunman, high on right wing propaganda, opened fire on their daddies, men prostrating themselves before their creator in prayer, bowing to the ground in a gesture of loving devotion to the God of Compassion and Mercy.

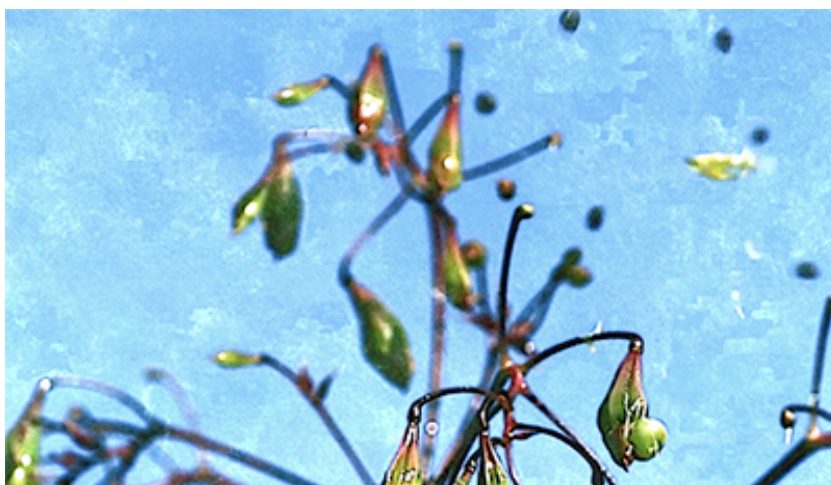
If this is where tolerance, patience, and open-mindedness get us, to hell with tolerance, patience, and open-mindedness. No more trying to see things from the haters' point of view. No more sympathizing with some overblown fiction about their marginalized status. They haven't suffered any more than anyone else, and even if they had it wouldn't entitle them to acts like this. They're just a bunch of stupid whiney babies and I refuse to listen to another word from them until they grow up.

I'm going to make a hole about five feet to the left of the Dante statue. It doesn't have to be very deep. I think it may be illegal to plant things like this in public parks but if it's legal for the media to lie and for a hate-inciting criminal to rule a country then hey, anything goes, right? Consider this an act of civil disobedience against a decadent system of law and order.

Right now it's too early to plant explosives because the ground is frozen, so I'm preparing my explosives indoors in tiny seed trays. I'm guessing that if I plant the seedlings in the park in April, Ramadan 2017 should see an explosion of violets there.

Violet seeds disperse by means of a sudden bursting of the seedpod; the seeds fly out, sometimes landing nearby, sometimes carried on the wind or on nearby sentient beings. The seeds spread out, find their place, and plant themselves, creating more violets, keeping weeds down, perfuming the air, and looking beautiful.

It's not likely anyone will see this while it's happening, but when they explode it will look something like this:



And when they bloom, like this.



Australians already have Violet Day, during which they commemorate the soldiers who died in World War I. Let's generalize that a little, shall we? Let's plant violets to commemorate those beloved men who lost their lives in the terrorist attack in Quebec City. Plant them inside, outside, on your own property, and yes, of course, in public spaces.

Let's create an explosion of violets across Canada. The time has come.

Wanda also writes the blog *The Mindful Bard: The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self*.

*[This one is my choice. I remember this massacre along with the others, the attacks at Charlie Hebdo, and more recently, the attacks in Vegas and Texas and I come back to this article, which was first published on February 3rd, 2017 in issue 2505. So many of these events leave us feeling powerless. We're on the other side of the country, or the world, and there's little we can do except sink into despair, anger, or, worst of all, resignation. But here's an answer. It's not much, but to me, it stands as an affirmation of life in the face of these kinds of activities. If we can still find the time, energy, and passion to plant flowers just for the beauty of them, there remains hope. I couldn't leave that out of what makes up The Best of the Voice. -Ed.]*



## Convocate!

Deanna Roney



It is getting to be that time of year when students nearing the end of their program are trying to decide whether to make the pilgrimage to Athabasca for convocation or not.

I decided early that I wanted to make it there, I wanted to walk that stage and be handed the degree I had worked so hard to earn. As the date neared, and I added up the kilometers, the hours, the money, I wondered, is this going to be worth it? Should I be making this trip for a symbolic walk across the stage when my degree had already been mailed to me and the folder we are handed is all but empty—symbolic. Still, I decided to go, I had worked hard to get the courses finished in time to make it there last year, it seemed silly to waffle.

And, I am so glad I did. It was an amazing experience. It was the perfect way to put a

period at the end of the chapter. It topped it off and made it feel done, finished, achieved. If I hadn't gone I think it would have felt like it had just faded off, there would have been no closure. In the weeks that followed my final assignment it felt incomplete. I received final grade, even the degree in the mail, and still somehow it felt unfinished. But, going to Athabasca, *seeing* the university, walking through the library I had called so many times, made everything feel solid, real, and finished. I was surrounded by classmates I had never met and I was amazed at the connection I was able to find with them. I saw students that I chatted with many times on the Facebook groups, and I heard the stories of everyone as they walked across that stage, everything they dreamed of, from running a bee farm to the struggles they overcame to be standing on the stage to hold that degree—dhow that was instrumental in realizing their dreams.



So, if you are able, I would strongly suggest going to convocation. I came away with such a feeling of accomplishment. Something I *should* have felt even without it, but there was just something about being there and being a part of the buzzing of excitement. AU does an amazing job in organizing convocation. There is no time for a rehearsal, like other schools do, but they have it down; it's done with such precision that it doesn't matter if you know where you're going or not, there is someone at every turn, every moment to guide you or show you where to go. I was anxious about this part of it, how do I know what to do, when to do it, but they have put this on so many times it is seamless and stress-free, the only thing I had to worry about was tripping on my way across the stage, and I am sure if that happened, they had someone ready to make it feel not so embarrassing.

But, if you can't go, (after all, AU students are rather spread out across the world) I would suggest doing something to celebrate your achievement, even just watching the livestream of convocation. Achieving your goal, finishing your degree, is a huge step. Finishing it through distance education is even more of an accomplishment and shows your level of commitment to yourself and your dedication to your studies. Don't let the completion of that go unmarked. Celebrate yourself, celebrate your classmates.

*Deanna is an AU graduate who loves adventure in life and literature. Follow her path on the writing journey at*

*<https://deannaroney.wordpress.com/>*

*[I didn't attend convocation myself. I never really saw the point. But this article from March 17th, 2017 (issue 2511) made me wonder if that might have been the wrong decision. Any article that can make me do that deserves to be in the Best of edition, and I was happy that a student reminded me of it. -Ed.]*



## Fly on the Wall

### Students of the World, Relax!

Jason Sullivan



At AU we have all felt a lingering shadow of dread as a deadline approaches. Maybe we've squandered spare time we could have used to apply ourselves; perhaps life just got in the way. It's as though we've revelled amidst plenty only to realize that our privilege can be crushed at any moment. Yet we must overcome the existential tension that deadlines have wrought. We may feel that the Sword of Damocles hangs over our head.

Damocles was a Roman who approached the emperor Cicero intending to educate him on the great fortune and wealth. In response, Cicero decided to give him a taste

of the perils of power. He situated Damocles amidst a bountiful table of delights, where the latter cast his gaze about until he noticed a glistening sword dangling above his head. Historically the allegory of the Sword of Damocles came to symbolize an abiding sense of foreboding, an awful realization that at any moment the game could all be over. Like emperors of our educational dominion, we AU students have the privilege of making our own study schedules and proceeding at a pace of our choosing. Yet we also carry the burden of responsibility in that we have only ourselves to blame if we lack the willpower to stick to our plans.

Cicero was terrified of assassination, much as we distance students may fear failure. At AU we know that we have to work hard and not get behind if we are to succeed with the privilege of setting our own timelines. As the inviting spring sunshine implores us to cast aside our (e)textbooks we strive to find that stereotypical concept: balance. Sometimes we just have to take a breath and pause.

Sometimes a moment of thought is worth an hour of action. John Lubbock, a Victorian-era naturalist and banker summarized the value of a time out with his meme-worthy phrase: "Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time" (Lubbock, online). When coursework feels too much like work that may be a cue to take a load off and allow the mind and body to wander. Personally, I prefer nature walks or reading *Philosophy Now* magazine, but playing with nieces and nephews or conversing with friends works fine too. So does lying on a warm green lawn. A study break is about allowing ourselves to just be what we feel like being so that when we drop our noses back to *ye ol grindstone* we feel a renewed vigour.

Repose allows us to reflect on how we learn so that we may tailor methods to suit our desires. A series of academic success tips from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay include the telling question "do you only study when you're in the mood?" (Pauk, online). As we know at AU, the mood may easily be put off when a deadline lurks. I find that sometimes draining the swamp of responsibilities might translate into suddenly feeling passionate about draining the sink of soaking dishes so as to assiduously wash them. Anything other than what academically remains to be done seems like a great idea.

It helps to remember that success as distance students is a marathon rather than a sprint. "All rising to a great place is by a winding stair" wrote Francis Bacon (Bacon qtd by Lubbock, online). In this sense even the small things, including breaks for snacks or TV, are part of the process of success. Even a private pep talk can help. After all, aren't we at AU all destined for brilliance? Of course we are! When we graduate (or successfully complete even a single course on our journey of self-improvement) we don't just forge our destiny. We also acquire something that no one can ever take away from us. As with the majestic skills of tradesmen, no life calamity can spirit away the knowledge our education has allowed us to glean in our future travels. Lubbock notes that a student who "leaves school knowing much but hating his lessons will soon have forgotten almost all he ever learned; while another who had acquired a thirst for knowledge, even if he had learned little, would soon teach himself more" (Lubbock).

AU is special because we are the pilots of our progress; we are here because we care. Our desire for learning propels us forward. With that impulse comes the huge responsibility to stay on course. This weight can be a virtue. It's not just that we gain the time we'd have spent commuting to school, we happily miss out on the excessive egos of professors and the drudgery of outdated learning styles. Lubbock claimed that, for too many students, education is "placed before them in a form so irksome and fatiguing that all desire for information is choked, even crushed out...our schools, in fact, become places for the discouragement of learning, and thus produce the very opposite effect from that at which they aim" (Lubbock, online). Elsewhere he dryly noted that "in too many cases it is odious to the young" (Lubbock, online). Happily, we at AU are limited *only* by deadlines rather than being bedevilled by brick and mortar constraints like arriving in class on time or participating in extracurricular activities that our peers pressure us into. We may miss out on academic socialization, but that is what the internet and local public lectures are for. In the end, we are free to engage in what Lubbock claimed ought to be a prime goal of education: "We should therefore endeavour to educate our children so that every country walk may be a

pleasure" (Lubbock, online). Society and nature become part of our classroom instead of external to it.

Once we've taken given ourselves a break the advantages of distance education ought to become clearer. Being in class without a classroom allows us to apply our studies to life all the time, to read ourselves into the world in new ways. Lubbock gives an example of this based on his abhorrence for learning grammar by rote: "though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues of Babel cleft the world into, yet, if he have not studied the solid things in them as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only" (Lubbock, online). Our education brings us the solid themes of meaning rather than the fleeting facts of phonics. We may feel that we're in Damocles' sandals, yet, if we relax and take time out, we may bring added enjoyment to our educational repast.

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Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.

*[Suggested by a student, this article stood out for me because I know many students come out of the holidays with a sense of dread at all they didn't get done that they mean to. Maybe that's not such a bad thing though. And Happy New Year folks, welcome to Volume 26!]*



## The Fit Student Gym Etiquette

Marie Well

If you plan to make gym-going a lifestyle, learn the etiquette.

First rule for new gym-goers? Don't chat—especially if you're female. You want to keep training for as long as possible, right? Then, don't get duped by Ed the gym playboy. Truly, he doesn't mean well.

*I'm in my fifties or sixties*, you might think. No matter. Ed stalks them all. As authors Crowley and Lodge say, "You are not there to make friends or get laid. You are there to save your life" (p. 93).

Eds fume when you don't respond. Yet, the moment you engage them, a hemorrhoid appears. With each passing workout, it swells bigger and bigger and bigger. No easy way to lance that lima bean. So, stay silent.



You can chat with staff. Ask them how to use the machines. Hire them to show you proper form. Just don't tell them your plan to try-out for the Olympics. They may argue.

Do buy Arnold Schwarzenegger's *The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding: The Bible of Bodybuilding*. The book shows step-by-step pictures for each exercise. Play close attention to the page that lists his weight routines. If you must, read his diet ideas. Or walk to a McDonald's drive thru and order 100 big macs—extra cheese, hold the buns. You might get a discount.

As a gym newbie, "you don't know how to behave and you're probably a bit of a loser by local standards, whatever the hell they are. The people are intimidating. .... Well, the hell with them" (Crowley & Lodge, p. 93). During my first gym visit, I spotted the ideal: a muscular, lean lady. Surely, she could teach me form. So, I stood behind her and copied her routine—that is, until she stopped, snarled, and slammed her weights.

Stay silent even with same sex. And don't sound like you're having five babies from across the room. No grunting. Breathe in, breathe out. Simple.

Lastly, to maximize cardio, travel to and from the gym on a bicycle. Buy a sleek road-racing bike. Plant mirrors on both handlebars. Buy flashing nightlights for your helmet. Most of all, don't get the Indy 500 cycling wear if you sport a Dad Bod. No-one needs to see your fries.

Chris Cowley and Henry S. Lodge share tips on gym etiquette and training strategies in their book *Younger Next Year: Live Strong, Fit, and Sexy – Until You're 80 and Beyond*:

- "Don't feel like an idiot if you can barely stay on the treadmill for fifteen minutes low speed the first day" (p. 84). "Do as little as fifteen minutes the first day" (p. 90).
- Don't go gung-ho on day one.
- Work your way up to forty-five minutes a day of cardio.
- Weightlifting makes your muscles sore: a good sore.
- Yet, certain sports make your muscles less sore: cycling, swimming, and cross-country skiing. Add these to your routine if possible.
- Don't think golf is your ticket to aerobics. Many chubby folk golf.
- "You're not doing anywhere near enough [exercise] if you're fat as butter. If you're short of breath. If you look like hell. Do not lie" (p. 95).
- "Take up some entirely new sport or activity, like squash or yoga, and get good enough at it to know whether you want to keep it in your life" (p. 136).
- Once a month, go on a three-hour aerobic afternoon. Hike, cycle, ski, skate, swim, dance, or play sports. Whatever you do, make it fun.
- Buy a heart monitor.
- Check with your doctor before starting a fitness routine. You might have a physical condition that heavy exercise makes fatal.

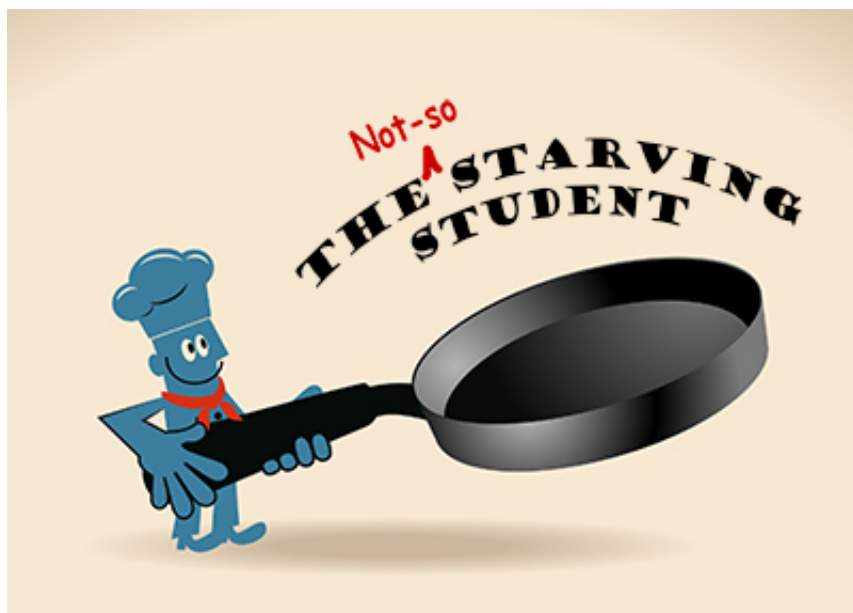
When I wore spandex to the gym, a PhD female asked me why. Good question. She wore a ballcap, scruffy tee, and baggy sweats.

Now, I bench press in oversized bunny hugs. And the girls bouncing in sports bras? They're doomed to lance those lima beans.

*[Decent advice plus a bit of humour. It's a winning combination and one that I always like to have in an issue of the Voice Magazine. That's what landed this article, from issue 2535 published on September 8, 2017, here in the Best of the Voice. -Ed.]*

## The Not-So Starving Student DIY Hot Pot

Xin Xu



A few years ago, when the first French fondue restaurant opened in Edmonton, I recall the amount of hype it received in the community. Everyone around me was bringing their spouse, children, friends, and relatives to gather around a pot dipping their various entrees into liquified cheese. The sight reminded me of my days in Shanghai, where the same type of hype was garnered around hot pot restaurants. Hot pot is Chinese-style fondue with vegetables and meat cooked in steaming pot of soup in lieu of cheese. Similar variations can be found in Japanese, Thai, and other south Asian cuisines

each with their unique twists. The whole experience is relaxing and entertaining. The cost at local restaurants average from \$23-\$30 for an all-you-care-to-eat meal which makes it an extra bang-for-your-buck deal. However, for those who prefer to enjoy this in the comfort of your own home, we made a tutorial just for you.

### Equipment needed:

Although not required, the pot is typically heated through a portable gas or electric stove. Cooking the meal over the stove is possible, but doing that will lose the communal aspect of group-cooking around the table. For the beginner, cooking around the stove can be an option, but if you want the full experience, a portable electric or gas stove is recommended.



The next step is to retrieve a pot. For the average hot-potter, a medium sized stainless-steel pot will do. However, the Chinese take their hot pot seriously, so they utilize a special pot divided into two compartments so that guests have the option of cooking food in two different broths.

For scooping utensils, a ladle is a minimum requirement to help fish out the contents. Unlike the French fondue we don't have the luxury of using skewers, so a ladle or a strainer ladle is preferred. Personally, I prefer using a strainer ladle which drains the broth when the items are ready to eat.



Once you have successfully scooped the contents of the pot up into your individual bowl or plate, you may use any eating utensil preferred (with the exception of your hands, as the contents tend to be hot, hence the name).

### Ingredients needed:

The best part of your hot pot experience is that it is 100% customizable. You're not confined to a certain type of protein or vegetable so pick liberally. There's also no limit as to the number of ingredients you chose to have. If you're catering a large crowd, you may have a dozen different items. For me, the magic number I aim for to serve 1-3 people is around 5 items.

#### My pick of vegetarian choices:

- Enoki mushrooms or white mushrooms
- Potato slices
- Iceberg lettuce
- Cucumbers
- Spinach
- Tofu
- Vermicelli noodles

#### My pick of proteins:

- Thinly sliced beef shank
- Thinly sliced lamb shank
- Meatballs

#### My pick of seafood (optional):

- Shrimp
- Imitation crab
- Dried seaweed
- Thinly sliced salmon
- Fish tofu

Besides your favorite ingredients, you will also need to purchase the soup base. The soup base typically comes in packages at the local supermarket. The soup base is the most critical part of hot pot and is rich with spices, herbs, and seasoning oils. Without this integral part, your hot pot simply would not fly. They look something like this:





**Cooking instructions:**

- Once your ingredients have been prepared on plates, your following steps are the most enjoyable moments of your dining experience.



- First, crank up the heat on the cooking surface (be a stove or portable hot plate)
- As soon as the heat has been turned on, add a soup base and wait for the mix to boil
- When the broth begins to boil, add cold or frozen ingredients first (frozen shrimp, frozen beef or chicken slices)



- When the water boils again, the contents are ready to be served.
- Repeat the previous steps and continue cooking until you and your guests are full

**Word of caution:**

The fastest way to ruin your hot pot experience is to burn yourself. There's a reason it's named "hot pot", for the contents are boiling. Be careful when serving yourself and others. Secondly, if you're using a gas stove, make sure you have a carbon monoxide detector to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Finally, cook your food thoroughly in the pot to avoid food poisoning.

*Xin Xu is a post-graduate health-science AU student, aspiring clinician, globe-trotter, parrot-breeder and tea-connoisseur*

*[This year, even before we got this snazzy new site, The Voice Magazine started going a lot more visual, with more pictures than we've had in previous years. The Not-So Starving Student column has been a fore-runner for us there, and this article, first published on October 20, 2017, in issue 2541, was noted by a student as reminding him of his youth when fondue was a thing, even though far more people were familiar with the idea of it rather than the experience, and so "it was neat to get a sense of the cultural realities associated with it." Plus, this one is also useful in that it gives the step-by-step if you decide to take it beyond the simple idea. Win! -Ed.]*



## HUSHED

Tara Panrucker

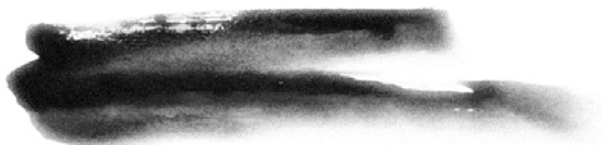
Sshhhhh  
 draw the curtains closed  
 unplug thoughts and plans  
 slip softly, slow-ly  
 deeply down  
 into a silken silence  
 enshrouded in night-time noiselessness

soul sealed in a velvet envelope  
 captured in the present moment  
 the chaos of life dissolves  
 from Ambition! Action! Achievement!  
 to a world condensed to taciturnity

luxurious lullaby  
 of unspoken words  
 lulled to serene dreamlessness  
 and a darkness  
 seamless and heedless  
 of hidden agendas or  
 ulterior motives

pacific hideaway of silent security  
 no one can touch  
 this place  
 the soft, safe blankets  
 are soundproof  
 hushing to sweet decadent sleep.

this peace



Tara Panrucker is currently enrolled in an AU online English course to help hone her writing skills and eventually achieve a General Arts Degree. She is a freelance writer and avid enjoyer of the outdoors, currently residing on Vancouver Island.

*[I wasn't sure about this one, after all, it was only published a few weeks ago, on December 15, 2017 (issue 2549) but the recommendation for it came with "Good to see something different in The Voice. All writing should be encouraged," and I couldn't agree more. So for that, and because it was good enough to generate some comments the first time it was published, here it is again, in it's proper place in the Best of the Voice 2017. -Ed.]*





## Unpack and Examine

“Warm, funny...unbearably moving.” Such is just some of the high praise for Fredrik Backman’s debut novel, *A Man Called Ove*.

Like one of life’s sweetest surprises, I stumbled on this book entirely by accident. During a visit to the Canmore library I checked out the book sale rack. I was drawn to the book’s somewhat plain title and different cover design. On the copy I ended up buying, we see a very low horizon, wispy clouds, and the back view of an older man. Not until now did I notice the cat rubbing up against his legs. The back-cover copy uses words like ‘grumpiest man’ and ‘curmudgeon’ and ‘old-fashioned clarity of belief’ and ‘idiots.’ What’s not to love, I thought.

And while I don’t admit to being curmudgeonly I saw and heard myself—over and over and over again—within the pages. I believe most men and women of a certain age exhibit these traits to a greater or lesser degree. Some of us may even be married to one. For the record, a curmudgeon is defined as “a bad-tempered, difficult, cantankerous person.”

Who among us hasn’t ranted about the idiots around us, the unflinching rigidity of bureaucrats (white shirts), the virtues of our chosen make of car, the bone-deep certainty of our beliefs? We might be dead wrong. We might be espousing opinions whose origins we no longer remember or understand. We might be making asses of ourselves. Yet it never occurs to us that we may just be plain wrong.

I can say unequivocally that this is the best book I’ve read all year and I’m at ninety-five titles so far. Considering it was translated from Backman’s native Swedish, it is impeccable in its language and structure. The cast of human characters is richly drawn, and even the cat grows on me as Backman imbues it with human emotion and thought. Each chapter could easily stand alone as a short story but together they create a masterpiece greater than the sum of its parts.

This book made me laugh out loud and nod in recognition. Yet as the inevitable end drew near I cried like a funeral mourner. I didn’t want this book or its people to end. I’ve since learned that an award winning foreign film was made based on the book. In September it was announced that Tom Hanks would star as Ove in an American remake of the movie. As good as Hanks is, I doubt that any movie will do the book justice.

Now of course, I want to read everything else Backman’s written. With titles like *My Grandmother Sends Her Regards and Apologies* and *Britt-Marie Was Here* and similar cover art I expect the same technical skill, meaningful subject matter, simple style, humour, and cry your eyes out emotion. It doesn’t always materialize with follow-up titles but here’s hoping.

In the meantime, I’ve got some opinions and beliefs to unpack and examine, from where I sit.

*Hazel Anaka’s first novel is Lucky Dog. Visit her website for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.*

*[When you’re a student, you’ve got limited time for pleasure reading, which is why I like the occasional book review to make sure that time isn’t wasted on a book that isn’t that good. While this one was only published back on November 10, it’s still emblematic of some of the best book reviews in The Voice Magazine -Ed.]*





# POLITICALLY BEREFT:

## Quebec's New Face-Covering Law



Wade Watson

*[Chosen by students, this comic came out on October 27, during the height of the controversy about Quebec's new face-covering law (that courts have now temporarily suspended). They say a picture can be worth a thousand words but sometimes "Ew" is all you need.]*



**AUSU**  
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS' UNION

This space is provided by AUSU. The Voice does not create this content. Contact [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) with any questions.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- Jan 9: [Edmonton Student Meet & Greet](#)
- Jan 10: [Deadline to register in a course starting Feb 1](#)
- Jan 15: [February degree requirements deadline](#)
- Jan 15: [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- Jan 26: [Call for Nominations Opens for AUSU Election](#)
- Jan 31: [Deadline to apply for course extension for Mar](#)
- Feb 9: [Deadline to register in a course starting Mar 1](#)

## Eyewear Savings

AUSU teamed up with FYidoctors to bring some great “preferred partner” savings on eyewear to our membership! FYidoctors has over 280 locations across Canada, and growing!

**Choose the Option that Works Best for You!**

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### OPTION B

**\$300 Progressive Vision Package (Approx. Retail Value \$475)**

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### OPTION C

**Save 20% off your entire eyewear purchase** including non-prescription sunglasses. Choose any frames (outside the select frames).

### OPTION D

**Save 10% off, per box, all Contact Lenses.**

**Find out more on our website [here](#).**



## Edmonton Student Meet & Greet

AUSU is hosting an AU student Meet & Greet in Edmonton! Great chance to meet fellow AU students, get to know your elected council, and get some free AUSU swag!

**Date:** Tuesday, January 9

**Time:** 5:30 – 7:00 pm

**Place:** Brewsters, 2335 111 Street NW, Edmonton

Please RSVP to [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) if you plan to attend.



## AUSU Council Meeting

AUSU's next public council meeting is coming up on **January 15 at 5:30pm MT**. Meetings are by teleconference, and all members are welcome to attend.

The meeting agenda and teleconference instructions will be posted on our website [here](#) at least 3 days prior to the meeting.

**AUSU**  
**Council**  
**Meeting**



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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

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