



THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 27 2019-06-28

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Embrace the Chaos

How to Live a Life

Perfect Summer TV

What to Binge!

Plus:

Council Connection

*The Value of Life's Crucibles
and much more!*



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The Voice Magazine

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Views and articles
presented here are those
of the contributors and do
not represent the views of
AUSU Student Council.

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

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

The Voice does not share its
subscriber list with anyone.
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Volume 27, Issue 26

© 2019 by The Voice
Magazine

ISSN 2561-3634

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you!
Send your questions and comments to 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

A Canadian Editorial

Karl Low



Happy Canada Day! At least, this is the last issue before Canada Day happens, so I thought I'd take the opportunity right now to note that.

As summer comes fully on, a lot of articles and media turn to describing the wonders of the out doors and helping you find activities to take advantage of it, but let's be honest, some people just aren't out-doorsy. Let me curl up with a good book or a fun new game, rain or shine, and I'm just as happy as at any sporting event. I'm sure I'm not the only one.

I know this because the newest student to submit to The Voice has supplied just what you might need to get you through those stretches of summer when it seems every staff member you need is on summer break and work slows to a crawl—a list of must-see binge-worthy TV shows.

Even better, she starts and ends the list with a couple of Canadian shows, just in time for Canada day, that works for me!

And our feature article this week is interviewing a student who came to Canada as a refugee and is now pursuing CPA accreditation here at AU. This student also happens to have one of the most unusual jobs that I've heard of, so the interview is definitely worth checking out.

Also this week, you have to read the Porkpie Hat. You just have to. Darjeeling Jones provides us all with some advice on how to live life that I'm absolutely certain you won't find anywhere else. And the best part is, I feel like I'm already doing it. At least the first part. It sure sounded familiar.

This week also has the Council Connection from the AUSU Saturday Council Meeting. Written by yours truly, this time, when I first got the agenda I figured it'd be an easy one since the meeting had no policies on the agenda. Without policy changes, what's to report?

As it turns out, a lot. Resignations from the executive, from council, programs shutting down at AU, changes to awards, and more. The truth, however, is that writing it out like that makes it sound a lot more dire than it is, but that won't stop me from using it on twitter as click-bait.

But speaking of click-bait, if you happen to be reading this and you haven't subscribed to our email list, I encourage you do to so. You'll get an email reminder every Friday with a (hopefully) pithy subject line and a shot of our table of contents so you know what you're getting into with The Voice that week, plus we occasionally (okay, rarely. As in almost never. But sometimes!) run secret contests or have other strange goings on in the mailing list. You never know.

Until then, however, enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karl". The signature is stylized with a large, flowing "K" and a simple "arl".

MINDS WE MEET



Amir Banihashemi is a fourth-year student in the Bachelor of Commerce program with a major in accounting. He plans on eventually applying for the chartered professional accounting program and plans to work at an accounting firm in order to fulfill the requirements for the CPA designation. This is his story.

Can you give us a little bit of background information about yourself? Who are you? Where do you live, where do you come from?

My name is Amir and I'm a 4th year accounting student. I was born in Iran and came to Canada in 1993 as a refugee. I attended grade school, high school, and three years of University in Windsor, Ontario. I took a break from school and started working in my mid 20's but a few years ago, after OSAP was expanded, I applied to AU to finish my undergrad with the aim to become an accountant.

What program are you in? Are you Excited to almost be finished your program?

Bachelor of Commerce with a Major in Accounting. I cannot wait to be finished, I'm not sure how or what it will feel like once I'm done but it will feel good, I'm

sure.

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

I run a small business here in Toronto teaching chess to youth in schools and after-school programs. I also play competitively in local tournaments. My second passion is playing and organizing soccer. We have a local group here with nearly 6000 Facebook members which I'm a volunteer of and we organize soccer leagues and tournaments.

Where does your passion for playing chess come from? Have you been playing for a long time?

I learned the game from my older cousin when I was around nine years old. We were bored and looking for something fun to do and he whipped out this board with pieces on it and I remember being fascinated. At school, a few of my friends joined the chess club and seeing as how I just learned this awesome game, I decided to take a shot at participating as well. A combination of passion and competitiveness pushed me to excel at the game for the past 20 years.

What are your plans for this education once you finish? How does it fit in with where you want to go?

I plan on applying for the CPA (Chartered Professional Accountant) program next fall and applying to work at an accounting firm to fulfill requirements to complete my CPA designation in the next 2-3 years.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

My mom, she sacrificed so much to make sure I have the best opportunities in life, and this has pushed me more than anything else.

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

I love the flexibility to study when and where I want to. I like being able to alter my schedule and take a longer or shorter time to finish courses. I dislike the e-textbook initiative and some courses have little to no learning support such as video or audio tools.

At what point did you waver the most about continuing your schooling? What caused it and what got you through it?

Finances were the biggest obstacle, though a few years ago OSAP was expanded and became more supportive which allowed me to continue school.

What's your most memorable AU course so far, and why?

FNCE 401 (Investments) it was extremely challenging, but I loved the content which is very interesting for me.

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

The opportunity cost of working full-time on my business but it will hopefully pay dividends in the future.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

Most tutors get back to me fairly quickly and the feedback they provide has been useful.

What's your pet peeve if you have one?

My biggest pet peeves are e-textbooks and the lack of video lectures.

Why do you dislike e-textbooks?

I'm indifferent to them in the sense that they have pros and cons compared to traditional books. They are certainly more mobile and can be stored easier. The downside is navigating through a traditional textbook for me is much easier and the right device needs to be available. My previous laptop, for example, had a terrible display which made reading on it for a long duration difficult. Many of my textbooks currently are on Vital's bookshelf app, which is ok, and has a nice feature that I use a lot called "read out loud." I do hope in the future the textbooks could make available in a PDF version for our courses so we can use them on e-readers such as the Kindle.

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

Probably a philosopher, someone like Aristotle or Plato.

Describe the proudest moment in your life.

This will happen this year when I finally graduate!

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.

I've been practicing yoga for over fifteen years!

How did you get into doing yoga?

When I was younger, I mainly did yoga to stay flexible and fit for playing sports. As I've gotten older, I enjoy it more as an activity that helps me relax and stay present. I still enjoy the benefits it provides physically but the calmness it brings seems to have taken greater importance in my life.

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

Everyone has a story, be kind to others and understanding.

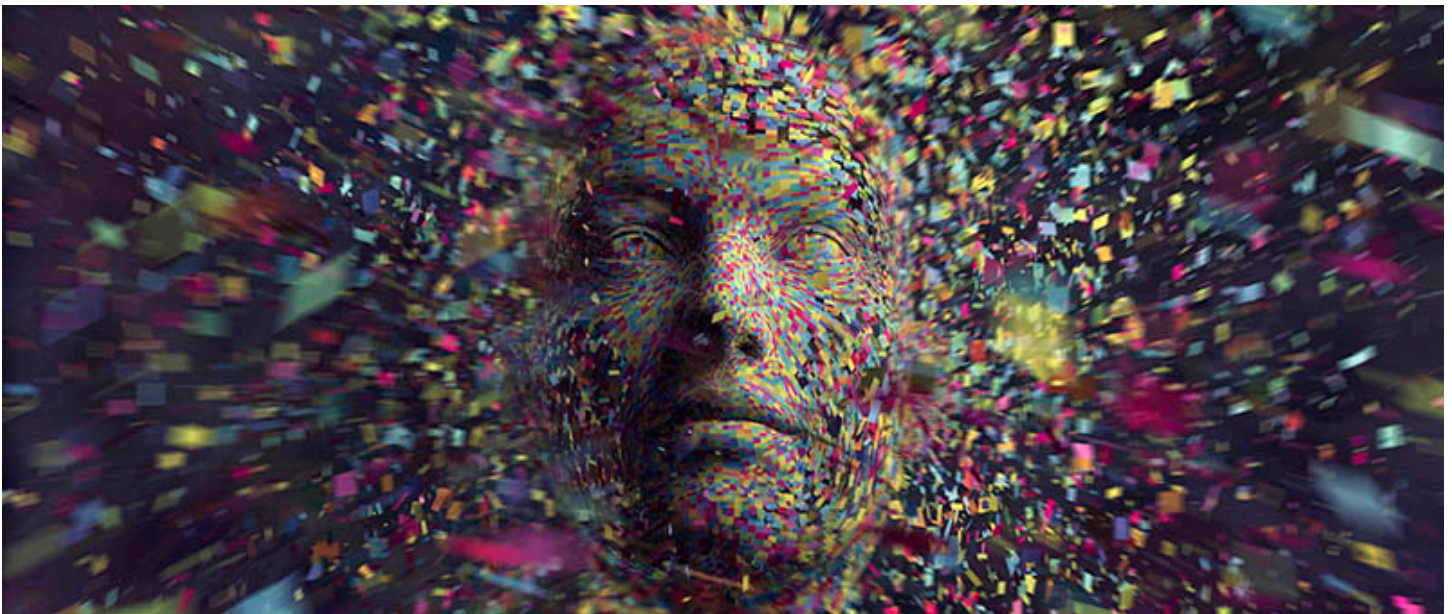
Have you traveled? Where has life taken you so far?

I haven't travelled much outside of Canada, but I've travelled to Vancouver and Victoria many times and absolutely loved it. My dream is to move to Vancouver Island should the opportunity present itself.

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

I'm reading a strategy builder by two British professors that discusses how to articulate corporate strategies visually.

Brittany Daigle is 22 years old and completing her BSc in Computing Science & Information Systems with AU from Toronto, Ontario.

**Porkpie Hat
Embrace the Chaos****Darjeeling Jones**

If there is one thing I should probably not be doing in this life, it is giving advice. Whatever good fortune I have come across, I have typically stumbled into ass-backwards rather than achieved through any sort of strategy or wisdom. Nevertheless, you just never know when somebody might benefit from a word or two about someone's experience, even my own. So, here is a handful of dubious and somewhat counterintuitive observations from my own meanderings through the world.

Embrace the Chaos.

I used to try and stay on top of all the things I needed to take care of in life, but it was truly fucking overwhelming.

Now, I have absolutely no system at all; I just run around doing random shit from morning to night, and hope that some of it is stuff that needed to be done, in some cosmic sense. I find, though, when I do whatever I'm doing with the right combination of inspiration, commitment, and joy, good things have a tendency of happening. This may be the worst possible advice for you, I don't know. For me, inspiration and the pleasure of being in the moment always, always trump perspiration and slogging devotion to completing a task. The greatest effort I put in is trying to find the wonder in whatever I'm working on. If I can't, I soon move on.

Never underestimate the value of small, earthly pleasures.

Many of us are continually seeking cosmic enlightenment in one way or another. I feel that this is a huge mistake. The universe is unruly and reluctant to conform to our preconceptions of spirituality or orderliness. I have never felt the presence of God, never been softly brushed by the divine feathers of the Celestial Bird Goddess of Paradise. But I have glimpsed the wonders of creation in thousands of relatively humble ways: eggplant parmigiana and dulce de leche; vinyl records by Lou Reed and Horace Silver; turns of phrase by Anais Nin and David Foster Wallace; the warmth of the sun on my face the shadows of birds crossing the moon while camping on Haida Gwaii. That is all that I need; actually, that is way more than enough.

Eliminate expectations.

People are fickle, and fate is capricious. Your friends and relatives will let you down. You will not get as many "likes" as you had expected. The meatloaf will be disappointing. Toby, that slimy lounge lizard from Customer Service, will steal your boyfriend. In the end, all that is left is the pleasure of the unexpected. Let's hope you have the eyes to see it. Life is a meal in the dining car of a train hurtling towards unknown destinations. Sometimes the views from the carriage windows are breathtaking, and sometimes all you see are slag heaps and strip malls. Just know that the scenery is ever changing. Eat what the waitress brings you. Order ice cream with that apple pie, then wash it down with a special coffee. Remember to always tip generously and accept that any bite just might be your last.

Always be open to curiosity and surprise.

Never assume you understand anything. I would be willing to bet my soul, if such a thing exists, that what we define as human consciousness is amongst the rarest, most luminous, and perhaps most dangerous substances anywhere in creation. It thrives best when rolling around in wonder, like an elephant bathing in mud. Just let it wash over you.

Besides imagination, our greatest human attributes are kindness, generosity, and civility.

Forget the grand gestures of love, passion, courage and selflessness. They are fabulous ingredients for epic poems, operas, and stage plays. But in the real world, it is the small kindnesses we bestow upon each other that make day-to-day life at least bearable, and sometimes even pleasant.

Embrace anonymity.

In a world filled with narcissists continually howling for attention, speak softly, call attention to the specialness of others over yourself, let others step in front of you in the line-up at the dessert table. You may just feel a lightening of the heart.



Perfect Summer Binges

Faye Lilley



Summer is finally here, and you know what that means; it's time for fun in the sun!

Until it rains. Or until the mosquitoes start eating you alive. Or until your sunburn gets so painful you can't move. Let's face it, sometimes the outdoors is not so great.

And that's when it hits you—your Netflix queue has been sitting there all through your long weeks of studying, growing longer and longer each time you hear about a trendy new show. How will you ever make a dent in this thing? Where should you even start? What's the point of trying if it takes you a full hour just to find something fun?

I've been in your shoes, my friends. I'm here to make your search a little easier.

I won't bother singing the praises of Netflix mega-hits like *Stranger Things*, *Black Mirror*, and *The Crown*. If you haven't watched those yet, I'm assuming you have a darn good reason. No, this is a list of the shows you may have overlooked, and, if so, you should move them to the top of your list. They'll all make for a perfect summer binge.

Alias Grace

Maybe you watched this limited series when it aired on CBC in 2017, but if you missed it then, you can watch it now on Netflix. It's based on the Margaret Atwood novel of the same name, which was based on the true story of a young woman named Grace Marks who was convicted of the murders of her employer and his housekeeper in the 1800s. Did she really kill them? If she did, how and why? Watch her tell her compelling story and decide for yourself. As a bonus, you'll learn some Canadian history along the way.



Big Dreams, Small Spaces

If you have a green thumb, or if you wish you did, this is the show for you. In each episode, British gardener extraordinaire Monty Don visits two separate families who each have small properties but, well, “big dreams,” and he guides them through the process of DIYing their unique but perfect dream gardens. From gigantic mud heads to sensory gardens for special needs children, this show makes you feel like you can do anything with just a little patch of earth, a little bit of money, and a lot of imagination.

Brooklyn Nine-Nine

If you love excellent comedy, but you haven't yet entered the hilarious world of the 99th Precinct, you have the most epic summer binge of all time coming your way. Boasting one of the most diverse casts on television and some of the funniest lines ever written, this show is a must-watch. Be warned: it is extremely quotable. Watch with friends, or nobody will understand you ever again. Nine-Nine!



The Good Place

If you haven't been watching *The Good Place*, well, you're probably going to The Bad Place. This is the most unique show you'll ever watch. Is it a sitcom set in the afterlife? Is it a serial dramedy? Is that even a thing? And how does it manage to talk about ethics and philosophy in every episode without being boring? Watch it and find out. If nothing else hooks you, the incredible performances from Ted Danson, Kristen Bell, and the talented newcomer supporting cast will.



The Haunting of Hill House

If having the crap scared out of you is your idea of fun, this is the show for you. If complex and relatable relationships between family members are your thing, this is the show for you. If fantastic writing and acting and directing are what you want in a show, this is the show for you. It's fantastic. Watch it. (But seriously, it's terrifying, so viewer discretion advised.)



Lost in Space

If you enjoy watching TV with your kids, or if you want to keep them occupied while you do your summer coursework, this show will be your new best friend. It's based on the 1960s show of the same name, in which a family named Robinson becomes stranded in space with only a pilot, a bumbling villain, and a robot for company. While there are plenty of throwbacks to the original show, this series is modern and brilliantly made. And the Robinson family aren't so alone in space this time—the new series boasts a diverse cast of supporting characters that reflects today's multicultural world. It's good family fun in space and perfect for a summer binge. (Also, the new robot is kind of hot.)



New Blood

Part buddy comedy, part murder mystery, this one-season BBC wonder is a must-watch for any crime drama fan, as well as for any millennial and/or first-generation citizen struggling to make ends meet. The series revolves around Arrash and Stefan, young misfits in their respective workplaces who reluctantly team up to solve a murder. They soon find they understand each other more than anyone else ever can, even though one is of Iranian descent and the other Polish. The banter between the characters and the hilarious scrapes they get into make this one of the most charming crime dramas of recent years.



X Company

And for Canada Day, this is one of the greatest Canadian series ever made, but it seems to have been overlooked by many Canadians. Set during WWII, it follows a team of Canadian/American/British spies from Camp X, a real spy-training school near Whitby, Ontario. With its gorgeous cinematography and brilliant acting, it's not just a show for history buffs or period drama fans. The bond between the characters will draw you in, and their spy adventures will keep you on the edge of your seat through all three seasons.

Faye is a writer, literature nerd, and TV addict who rarely sets foot in the real world. Thanks to AU, she is overcoming health-related obstacles and pursuing her lifelong dream of an English degree.



Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of The Voice Magazine.

June 28 is International Body Piercing Day, and, guess what? Some of our writers past have expressed themselves on the topic of body piercings.

Body art is so yesterday. In 2007, writer and former Voice editor, Sandra Livingston predicted the tattoo and body-piercing fad will end soon. "When those 30-, 40-, and 50-something moms and dads are sporting giant stars on their backs and carrying the ghostly telltale eyebrow scars of piercings past, their kids will be doing the opposite." Editorial—The Next Big Thing, August 24, 2007.

Why stop at piercings? Busby LeClair attempts to ride the crest of the botox wave. "I was making fashion statements in the area of bum cleavage back when it was a phenomenon known as 'plumber's butt'". Elective Cosmetic Surgery for Fun and Profit



Course Exam

Brittany Daigle

COMP 369 (Practical Game Programming) is a three-credit computer science course that is designed for students to learn how to develop platform-independent computer games using programming languages C/C++ with Allegro, an open-source, cross-platform library which is both powerful and versatile. Allegro can be used on Windows, Linux, and Mac platforms. Although the focus of this course is on practical game programming skills, students will also be exposed to game design, and have the opportunities to learn the basics of game design and practice their game design skills throughout the course. This course has COMP 206 (Introduction to Computer Programming (C++)), COMP 306 (C++ for Programmers), COMP 308 (Java for Programmers), or professor approval as a prerequisite.

Practical Game Programming consists of eight units (Introduction to Game Programming, Introduction to Game Programming, Game Design Basics, Programming Sprite in Games, Timing in games, Scrolling backgrounds, Using data files in game programming, Advanced topics for game programming), one assignment weighing fifteen percent, two assignments weighing twenty percent, one assignment worth twenty-five percent, and a final examination worth twenty percent. To receive credit for COMP 369, students must achieve a course composite grade of at least a “D” (fifty percent) on the final examination and on each of the four assignments.

Students should note that the final examination for COMP 369 must be taken online with an Athabasca University approved exam invigilator at an approved invigilation centre. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the chosen invigilation centre can accommodate online exams. For a list of invigilators who can accommodate online exams, visit the Exam Invigilation Network.

Lionel Pinkhard has been studying at Athabasca University since March of 2016 and he is halfway finished. He is enrolled in the Bachelor of Science program, with a major in Computing and Information Systems and a minor in Game Programming. He explains that “The program is interesting and challenging. I like the flexibility of the course selection and how I can study something completely unrelated and still earn credit towards the Bachelor of Science degree.” As for online learning, he states “Online learning allows me to work on my own schedule and I truly enjoy the flexibility that it offers me. However, I would have enjoyed more social interactions, sports and other events offered by traditional universities.”

Lionel started COMP 369 in June 2018 and finished in January 2019. He states, “I took an extension to this course as I was busy with five other courses that required my attention and I wanted more time to study for the exam.”

When asked to briefly introduce himself, Lionel states “I am 34 years old and from Cape Town, South Africa. I am currently working and studying part-time. I like doing many things - playing

video games, reading books, watching Netflix, riding my motorcycle, flying, travelling and learning about things that interest me.”

He provides an explanation of the COMP 369, stating “The course title is quite accurate in describing the nature of the course. This is a practical course where you will be building games and doing some research. COMP 369 does not focus much on the theory of game programming.”

He continues, “The course uses the Allegro 4 library, which is quite old, for graphics, sound, and input, but the concepts could easily be applied to something else.”

Lionel concludes, stating “Knowledge of programming is essential to take on this course, with C programming being particularly useful as the games will be written in C. This could be a challenge for some due to the heavy focus on object-oriented programming in other courses. You are allowed to use C++ instead of C, but the textbook uses C and the Allegro library has some extra challenges with C++.”

When asked to explain the structure of the course, he explains that “There are four assignments and a final exam. Each assignment involves doing some research and writing a report, creating a game design, and building a game. The final exam is online and includes multiple choice and programming questions.”

Lionel would recommend this course to other students, stating “Most of the course was easy, although the assignments were time-consuming. It takes some time to compile the research, design a game, and implement the game while also creating/acquiring artwork, music, and sound effects.”

As for any tips or tricks to completing this course, Lionel states “It would be useful, though absolutely not required, to take COMP 318 before COMP 369 so that you understand the theory behind game programming. Access to a collection of games, on PC or console, would be quite useful to explore different genres and get some ideas for research and design. Also, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, GIMP, and/or Inkscape are useful for creating/editing art assets.”

He continues “I did not know about it at the time, but Bxfr (<https://www.bfxr.net>) is useful for creating simple game sound effects. This tool is discussed in COMP 486, but not COMP 369. Alternatively, Audacity is quite useful.”

He concludes, stating “I found a hardware MIDI controller to be useful for preparing game music, but it is certainly not required. I used third-party music and art assets for the later assignments.”

Whether COMP 369 is a degree or program requirement of yours, or the topics discussed above are of interest to you, this course will have you learning interesting material surrounding practical game programming.

Brittany Daigle is 22 years old and completing her BSc in Computing Science & Information Systems with AU from Toronto, Ontario.

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

None this week, it's a quiet time of year

looking ahead...

Library Orientation Webinar

Wed, Jul 10, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Library

library.athabasca.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration necessary

All events are free unless otherwise specified



The Enduring Value of Life's Crucibles

Wanda Waterman



“How do you know when the gold is purified?” we asked him, and he answered, “When I can see my face in it [the liquid gold in the crucible] then it is pure.”

- *Gold Cord*, Amy Carmichael

Marital counselling guru David Schnarch uses the word “crucible” to describe those periods during which couples learn they can’t have their cake and eat it, too, that is, that they can’t expect to hold on to the benefits of long-term commitment while pursuing whatever their little hearts desire. In the crucible they experience intense, painful conflict that either destroys the marriage or strengthens it.

Marriage isn’t the only circumstance in which the cake dilemma knocks us out of our comfort zones. University study represents a kind of self-imposed crucible: We set aside

several years devoted to getting an education, and the success of the initiative depends, in part, on how much we’re willing to postpone gratification and accept hardship.

There are many other examples. Just think of how you approach those forks in your life’s road, those times when you’re required to give up something you love to gain something you desire.

This sort of life experience is a crucible. It’s a period in which your character is heated up for the purpose of refining, just as metal is heated to the melting point to remove impurities. Whether or not you emerge from your personal crucible a better person depends on whether you’re open to the refining process.

One thing that strikes me again and again in the biographies of influential people is how their major life choices are so often launched by a single undesired event that steers them away from mediocre (and sometimes unfortunate) lives. It always takes some kind of intense and lasting difficulty to get them off the road of the ordinary long enough to bless the world with their art, ideas, or actions. This event is nearly always painful and difficult, as is the process of moving from an ordinary life to a remarkable one. But in retrospect this dreaded hardship often turns out to be a big blessing in disguise. Apparently, it takes a crucible to raise a notable adult.

Even non-famous people will credit hard times with teaching them the value of frugality, human connections, health, simple pleasures, meaningful pursuits, and even life itself. At the same time, you probably know at least one person whose life appears safe and comfortable but who’s always griping about trifles. A good week or two in a crucible might just turn that grouch around.

As unpleasant as they may be, we needn’t make those crucible periods worse by assuming that they’ve arrived as divine punishment or by fighting to get out of them. Many addictions and bad relationships have been launched in attempts to escape the crucible; better to live through the pain than to get away by entering the service of an abusive partner or drug dependency.

It's not easy, but if you look for the humour in your situation your load will lighten like magic. And how much more meaningful life becomes when we can learn to say, "Yes, this is really hard, and I want it to be over, but because I know good things can come of it, I'm going to relax and learn whatever life is trying to teach me."

It's not just about us. As hard as it may be to go through hard times ourselves, it can be even harder to watch our loved ones go through them, especially when there's little or nothing we can do to help. But instead of trying to rescue them or "fix it" for them we can have the courage to simply walk through their fire with them, seeing the potential of their suffering to enrich their lives in surprising ways.

The next time life places you or someone you care about in a crucible, take a deep breath, relax, and get ready for a course in the school of hard knocks. The more ready you are to learn, the better your outcome will be.

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



Fly on the Wall

Canada Day: A Celebration of Us

Jason Sullivan

More than Not the U.S.!



We're a pretty fantastic country. Other nations have linguini or lederhosen, croissants or crumpets, Guinness harps or apple pie and on and on. But Canada has beavers and brews, hockey and maple syrup. And at a deeper (if more ambiguous) level, we like to think of ourselves as a nation with a big heart that sets a good example, if only our boisterous sibling to the south would follow. This image of an ideal and endearing self endures because we tarp it over the campsite of our patriotism without looking too closely at the pokey little details.

AU likewise illustrates a special breed of excellence: the distance student. AU scholars embody a far-flung landscape mentally connected at the most intangible of levels. And, like our country, we at AU share a bond that's hard to place but that nevertheless brings pride and confidence. There's nothing quite like the sensation of abiding assurance and limitless relief from having just finished a course. We're like astronauts or monastics in that we are spatially isolated but intangibly bonded with our fellow students; we all share the same academic cosmos. It might seem hyperbolic to envision AU as a magical shared experience reducible neither to symbolism nor to caricature but, as with patriotism, there is really something there that makes us ourselves. While Athabasca students don't have sports mascots to rally around, or a physical campus to, one day, as alumni, relate our memories about, we share a connection as learners whose learning goes beyond the so-called classroom of life and enters the real world of academic growth.

Behind the frills and gimmicks of a University or a Nation lie deeper identifications; we Canadians often like to think of ourselves as a tolerant and diverse country, neither too brash nor too bashful nor too arrogant or prone to being inconsiderate. These traits are supposed to be bred into us as though they were natural. How inborn are they, though, and how much of all this is an exercise in feeling superior to others? The classic documentary *Being Canadian* notes that it's possible that we are "the most passive-aggressive people in the world." Hmm.

Act Natural, But Don't Act Like You're Acting!

So, we're not perfect, but being ourselves comes naturally. Being naturally Canadian is like being naturally a woman or a man; we know there's countless ways to be ourselves but essentially we feel like we have an authentic core. And what counts, or is discounted, as natural? Shopping provides a few clues: camouflage pants, moose t-shirts, and Tim Hortons drive thru lineups all give potential illustration to who we are as Canadians. But we aren't born with a double-double pressed to our lips any more than we are born wearing a blue or pink bracelet indicating our gender. We learn not only to act our age; we also learn to act our national identity as we are socialized to understand it. We can scientifically agree that we each have the physical correlates of our biological sex but gender itself is partly a cultured construction. Kilts are skirts, after all. Not even clothes mean the same thing everywhere. Clearly, ontological facts indicate that who we are is somewhat fluid. Nowhere is this more clear than at AU, where our student selves may not fit the checklist for stereotypical college attendees.

Not everything is as advertised when it comes to being Canadian. Just ask a few peers about the success of the Toronto Raptors and some will immediately explain why they aren't as into basketball as hockey. There's more to sports than a team being from a Canadian city; something makes Canada a hockey country almost as though the ol' stick and rubber is in our blood. Meanwhile, the CFL is an all-Canadian professional sports league, with half its players Canadian-born, even though we're playing what is often termed American football.

When taking sociology at AU we immensely solidify our academic position in the eyes of our non-scholarly peers if we have a few Canadian thinkers to reference out of our brain's bank. Performance of identity is often a conscious act, after all.

So, to impress those peers this Canada Day, in honour of our great Canadian social theory industry, I'd suggest Marshall McLuhan (the medium is the message), Erving Goffman (all of life's a performance), Naomi Klein (we're oppressed into a hideous vortex of advertising), and Joseph Heath/Andres Potter (marketing provides outlets for us to express our narcissistic sense of unique and superior identity; rebellion is actually a form of conformity)

Crucially, there's a Toronto bias in this list (all are Torontonians except for Goffman, whose sociology is based not coincidentally on a dramaturgical process of learning to act as if one belongs). This Toronto-centrism matters in terms of understanding the fact that national identity is neither natural nor self-evident. Canada is not a country of equal regions any more than any other; just ask Americans who live in the so-called flyover states! A country as large as ours and as historically recent in its formation contains not only vestigial limbs of colonial identity but also geographic bias. One of my undergrad history textbooks at AU even contained a chapter titled "Empire Ontario".

A Glance in the Mirror is an Invite to Interpretation

So, what it is that makes us us, and not the US, is up for debate—depending on who you ask. After all, Bob and Doug Mackenzie might be hilarious characters but how many people actually say 'oot and aboot' or exclaim 'you hoser!' without actually referencing either the film or attendant cultural stereotypes or both. Culture is often about performing an ironic self-reflexivity that

would make Jean Baudrillard proud. His *Simulation and Simulacra* asserts that the makeup (pun intended) of our world is essentially a hall of mirrors; we meander confidently through what we think we know but the basis of this knowledge has long ago lost its believability and entered a realm of masquerade. (Baudrillard, online).

But there must be a core Canada somewhere. We don't have to wistfully hum the melodies of Simon and Garfunkel's line "they've all come to look for America" do we? Aversion to an American explanation of national identity with regard to that most Canadian phenomenon of all, being Canadian, would be impolite and a bit close-minded. Canada Day is about having a good time and maybe celebrating another great school year as AU students so let's cut the analysis and pretend like we don't know what we know.

Nevermind Simon, Nietzsche says: Don't Think So Much, Just Do You...at AU

So let's all be natural, *AU naturel* as it were, and just let all our Canadian-ity hang and flow out on Canada Day! But wait, hold that non-thought, our student selves demand critical thinking rather than passive acquiescence to the status quo. For there to be a natural begs there to be an unnatural and we have to be aware of, and possess at some level, what we are not in order to understand what we are. Here Friedrich Nietzsche in his inimitable fashion surveys the problem. "You want to live according to nature? Oh, you noble stoics, what fraudulent words! Think of a being such as nature as prodigal beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without aims or intentions, without mercy or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain; think of indifference itself as a power – how could you live according to such indifference? To live—is that not precisely wanting to be other than this nature? Is living not valuating, preferring, being unjust, being limited, wanting to be different? And even if your imperative 'live according to nature' meant at bottom the same thing as 'live according to life' – how you could you not do that? Why make a principle of what you yourselves are and must be" (Nietzsche, 39). Nietzsche demolishes the *be natural* approach using his rhetorical bulldozer. It's one composed of ores mined from the depths of the earth and from dead dinosaurs fracked out of the abyss of archaeological time. It's a human implement, rife with metaphors and inseparable from the symbolism that makes our species special.

There is nothing outside of nature and, let's be honest, if everything we say, feel, think and act counts as Canadian then any human behaviour can count as Canadian. If we're a nation of plurality and diversity, then what are its limits? Bruno Latour notes that nature includes everything one can imagine as humans; therefore, how we interpret the natural world is invariably, and naturally, a political act (Latour, online).

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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.

Council Connection

Karl Low



The July 15, 2019 meeting of Council was held on a Saturday during the AUSU Councillor Retreat. Held in a larger room in the offices of AUSU, it was an interesting site to see the most of the AUSU council gathered around the table for the meeting. It was an unusual meeting in the sense that it was primarily held for information purposes, with no policies being on the agenda for this month. Despite (or perhaps because of) this, the Council report is a long one, as a lot of information came out during this fairly short meeting. You've been warned.

Absent from this meeting were councillors Sarah Blaney Lew and Christine Hudder. Also, not in attendance was former councillor Julian Teterenko who had evidently resigned between the last meeting and this one.

This, I think, answers a left-over question I had as to why AUSU Council had narrowly chosen in a secret ballot last meeting to defeat a motion to remove Julian from Council for not adhering to the councillor academic requirements. It's not hard to look between the lines and think that part of what was discussed in the in-camera session was Julian choosing to tender his resignation rather than be removed from good standing with AUSU. Of course, this is supposition on my part.

Another personnel change that happened between meetings was councillor Melinda Goertz was no longer the Vice-President External. That position was now being held by former Vice President Finance and Administration, Natasha Donahue, with her former role being taken over by the Voice's own Brittany Daigle. When I asked Melinda for comment on the change in position, she informed me that the move was her choice as she has decided to focus more on her studies and personal life, and also wanted to assure me that she has full confidence in the new executive. Having been on Council myself, many years ago, I can understand the desire, as the two-year term of AUSU councillors is already longer than most student councils, and the additional demands of the Executive positions can make it difficult to achieve a solid work-life balance.

On their end, AUSU has confirmed in the most recent executive blog that Melinda stepped down voluntarily from the position and they look forward to continuing to work with her in her position as an AUSU councillor.

The meeting got under way with the usual adoption of the agenda, approval of previous minutes (including the special executive by-election triggered when Melinda stepped down) and a review of the action items list, currently empty.

The first piece of new business was the official announcement of the new executives, followed by a motion to appoint someone to the awards committee as a voting member following the various personnel changes. The new VP External, Natasha Donahue, took up the position.

Next came a short report on the council retreat, where it was noted that things had gotten behind schedule because of how conversations went long with various councillors, staff, and executives all bringing forward ideas, and that the retreat was not yet over, as some of the final sessions had been pushed until after the Council Meeting.

President Brandon Simmons noted several years ago when Council was first discussing having a retreat, there were some concerns as to whether it would be worth the money, but the overwhelming opinion of Council now is that it definitely is, as it enables AUSU Council to accomplish a lot of work in a very short span of time.

It was also noted at this retreat that the next year would be one where AUSU Council puts a significant amount of emphasis on provincial advocacy.

Executive Director Jodi Campbell added on behalf of the staff that it was good for the staff to get face time with student council to be able to both deal with a lot of hot topics and be able to touch on a wide gamut of smaller topics through-out the two days.

Council also noted a specific thank you to staff for organizing and getting the retreat together, especially so close to convocation activities, and a special note of thanks to the administrative assistant, Jamie Mulder.

Moving to the reports, President Simmons wanted to highlight the AUSU executive's participation at the CASA conference and noted that he'd been elected as secretary of the board, which will be a very informed group this year as all but one are returning delegates. It was noted that this enables the CASA board to immediately start moving forward with advocacy actions, which is especially important as this is a federal election year.

He also wanted to highlight the Virtual Learning Environment Conference, a conference held by AU to look at challenges and best practices to enhance students' abilities to learn at a distance. The premise is that AU is starting to look at what's required for a student management software, looking beyond what AU already has and instead thinking about what would be most optimal for students. He noted that he had a chance to share with AU staff and faculty some of the concerns that AUSU has heard regarding the instructional environment of AU and was pleased to see significant support from both staff and faculty for what he brought forward.

The next report was that of the new VPEX, (former VPFA) Natasha Donahue, who also wanted the CASA conference noted, and her new positions in CASA on the Federal Policy Committee and board conduct officer. The former, she explained, will help to keep AUSU's special concerns included in CASA's policies for this federal election.

Being on the AU GFC awards' committee, she also noted there was a slight change to one award from AU, where before an award would provide \$750 to a students' account for a free course, this disadvantaged out of province students. Now it's simply credited as a free three credit course.

Another item of note, this time in the Member Engagement and Communications Committee report, was the latest student social had 21 students, in total, show up for the event. It was pointed out that getting the new reports from AU has made it possible to do events like this as they can now target emails more specifically.

Also of interest to students, the Communications and Member Services Coordinator's report pointed out that lynda.com will soon become Linked-In Learning under Microsoft's new ownership. This transition is supposed to get rid of the login difficulties and workarounds that students currently have with lynda.com as any athabasca.edu email address will suffice. It will

also make it possible for students to access the learning materials from mobile devices, something which was difficult before due to the login process.

Finally, during the question period, I pointed out how in the President's report, it was mentioned that the AU Bookstore project was officially being shut down. It had been so long since I heard anything about this, I didn't remember what it was at first. President Simmons reminded me that it was the initiative to give students a choice between a physical text or an e-text, with a discount if students choose to go with the e-text. AU ran into many difficulties with the proposal, including issues that some of the sellers do not even want to provide physical textbooks anymore. In response to this, Athabasca is trying to think of other options, which may involve moving away from purchasing textbooks from separate providers at all, with all course-content being built into the course and as such available for students for life.

That idea sounds great to me, but it was also pointed out that this was a longer-term goal and currently only at the preliminary stages of investigation, in the shorter term, AU is looking to see if it can reduce printing restrictions from publishers and help students get hold of more loose-leaf copies.

There currently is no council meeting set for July, but there will be one held on August 8, 2019 at 6:30 pm MDT. Contact services@ausu.org for information on how to attend and to receive a meeting package.

The Fit Student **What to Do When You Hit Rock Bottom**

Marie Well



Today was my birthday, and my sister, who phones me once a year, never phoned. Instead my beloved niece wished me a happy birthday from my sister via Facebook text message. I felt like crying.

I messaged my niece that every human has a low point in life. When we hit our low, which we all at some point do, we either sink into despair or turn our lives around. Some seek God; others go on meditation retreats; still others seek Buddhism, self-help books—even therapy. But if you learn to love unconditionally, you'll discover healing and happiness.

A beloved mentor of mine said to guard my mind from judging others. And I understood why she said that. When we stop judging others and instead look at our own faults, we improve. We become better workers, better friends, better companions. And we find happiness.

If you put 110% love and energy into everything you do, and into everyone you meet, you begin to thrive. Treat every minute of the day as if it's the first date with your biggest crush. Put your very best side forward every day to everyone and every task for the rest of your life. That's the secret to unconditional love—and your happiest, most successful life.

And unconditional love needs to be directed at more than just your loved ones. Focus the love on your bodily aches and pains, your reflection in the mirror, your dinner plate, your higher power. In other words, focus the love on anything that hits your conscious mind at every moment of the day. Walk around love-struck every moment of the day.

But never judge—not others, just yourself. But with love. Treat your wounded self as another “you,” someone you don’t judge but to whom you show great love. Then figure out how you can become your happiest, most positive version of yourself to comfort your wounded self. That way, you grow—and you feel—even more inwardly beautiful.

Part of loving unconditionally involves listening to others. Deeply. Put aside everything just to listen. That way, you can offer others encouragement. And apply that same level of conscientiousness to your household cleaning, to your work, to your schoolwork, to your appearance, to your timber of laughter, to your praise of others. After all, we only have one life. So, fill every second with love.

It’s when we take life—and others—for granted, that we head toward our lowest point. So, turn your life around before you hit rock bottom. Live lovestruck every day.

On my birthday, I felt saddened by all the wrongs I did my sister. And I placed no blame on her. Instead, I took comfort: I could slowly woo her again, and maybe one day win her over.

And I looked to my wounded self with no blame, just with unconditional love—love from my happiest, most positive inner self. After all, our happiest, most positive inner self is who we truly are.

Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Senior Caregiver Scholarship

Sponsored by: SeniorAdvice.com

Deadline: July 15, 2019

Potential payout: \$2000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be attending a two- or four-year university or college in the Fall of 2019 and must have been involved in caregiving for a family member or friend.

What's required: An email with contact and school info, along with a current transcript, and a maximum 3-minute video in which you provide answers to five given questions about your caregiving experience and your education.

Tips: Check out the submissions of [previous winners](#) for inspiration.

Where to get info: www.senioradvice.com/senior-caregiver-scholarship-fall-2019



The Study Dude

Focus to go from Failure to Success in a Day

Marie Well



“How many important things did you get done last week? I’m talking about the things that actually brought you closer to your bigger goals and dreams. Take a second to think about it. Chances are zero to none. Why is that? Because of one thing, your FOCUS” (O’Brien, location 138 of 308, 35%).

I had gotten into a rut. I felt not good enough for those around me. I felt roadblocked, unable to get the work skills I desired. I felt doomed to repeat a recent pattern of failures. I felt like I’d lose it all.

And then I read a sample of a book called *Lessons for a Happy Marriage*. (The

first three chapters are free to read.) That’s when the light shone.

The book talks about how to love unconditionally, how to woo your loved one as if it’s your first date every day. In other words, give all your heart, time, energy, and soul. Praise him or her every moment of the day. Show your best side nonstop. See only your own faults, never his or hers.

And then I thought, *Why not do the same with friends and family?* Within a day, three friends replied to my shows of love with the words, “Awww, that is so sweet!” But then I thought, “I’d be in a better position to do nice things for my loved ones if I earned more income.” In that moment, I set my big goal. Author Alan O’Brien says, “Goals give you focus You can have all the potential in the world but without focus, your attempts will be aimless” (O’Brien, p. 13 of 143, 11%).

So, I began to focus on gaining marketing skills. But, “focus will only happen when we have said yes to one option and no to all other options. Simply put, elimination is necessary for focus” (O’Brien, p. 2 of 143, 5%). Elimination, hey? So, I unsubscribed from dozens of emails—all health-related newsletters. Health news had become my addiction but hardly paid the bills. So, I replaced my focus on health news with subscriptions to marketing newsletters. I also subscribed to four marketing podcasts. All in the same day.

I then packed away my well-read nutrition textbook—and shopped online for marketing textbooks to read instead. And rather than watch health documentaries while I ironed clothes, I listened to marketing podcasts. “One of the first things you must do is build momentum. You should do this by establishing new habits and rituals that support your goal” (O’Brien, p. 25 of 143, 19%).

And in that same day, I found what I had been searching for over the past year: marketing conversion strategies. For the past year, employers wanted to know my conversion strategies, but I had little to say. And in one day, I located top-notch courses on the topic.

In that one day, I learned more about marketing than I did the prior year. And, to my surprise, I felt as pumped about marketing as I did about health.

So, in one day, my friendships flourished, and my career hopes crystalized. All because of a single-minded focus based on the value of unconditional love. "In truth, unless your beliefs, values, lifestyles, other goals, priorities, and self-ideals are in line with the goal you want to achieve, then you really don't stand a chance to achieve it You must realign your core values so that they match your goals" (O'Brien, p. 19 of 143, 15%). So, start with your values, and from there, craft your big goal.

I've never felt happier. And I wish for you to feel that high, too. So, "what habits do you need to give up? There's plenty You need to figure out which habits are taking you forward and which habits are not" (O'Brien, p. 26 of 143, 19%). In a single day, trash your bad habits to focus solely on your goal.

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Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following What's Hot around AU's Social Media Sites.

AthaU Facebook Group

Kimberly wonders how flexible the word-count limit is on essays; after getting feedback she manages to pare her essay back from double the limit to 70 over. Monique is devastated by a seemingly impossible exam for HIST 201; after a virtual group hug she's going to nail it in the supplemental! Ben seeks help trying to narrow down a list of possible electives.

Other posts include guidance on booking exams, long delay for marks, small-town student pool, and courses CRJS 362, FREN 358, POLI 307, and PSYC 375.

Twitter

@austudentsunion tweets: "If you are struggling and need someone to talk to, there is help. AU offers free 24/7 support through Homewood Health. Just call 1-800-663-1142 or visit <https://bit.ly/2G8Jxm8> for more details."

@au_press tweets: "WE ARE COMING HOME tells the story of the highly complex process of repatriation and why it is essential for revitalizing communities. <http://www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120242> ... #NIPDCanada #NationalIndigenousPeoplesDay."

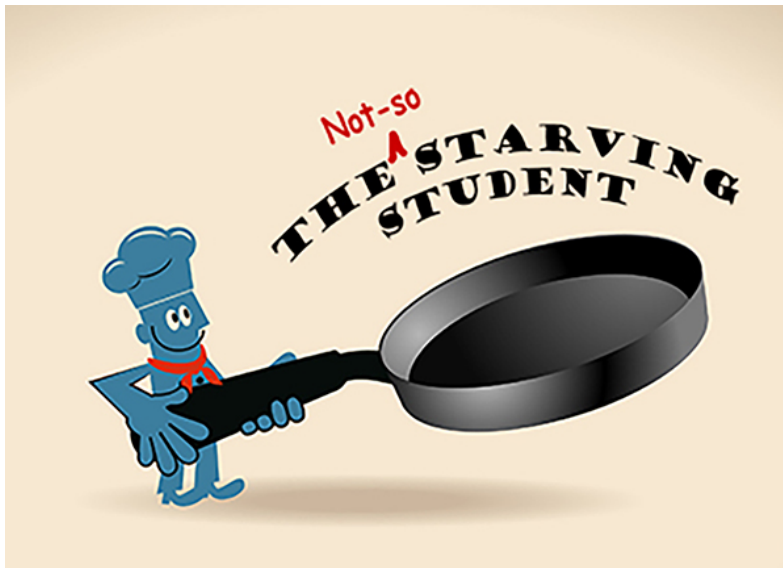
Youtube

Settle in for three hours of convocation glory with Athabasca University 2019 Convocation - Day 1, June 7, 2019.



The Not-So Starving Student Six Japanese Street Foods to Try

Xin Xu



For AU foodies looking for a trip filled with unusual, ethnic street foods, making a trip to Japan should be at the top of the list. Summer brings out some of the best street food in Japan. In my most recent trip to Japan, I explored the areas of Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto to sample the best local cuisines directly from food vendors on the street. I've compiled some of the top ones from this trip.

Dango

Dango is a Japanese dumpling prepared with rice flour. Similar to mochi, it is traditionally made sweet, but can be made with a savory soy sauce coating as well. Typically, this tasty snack is served on a skewer and is both appealing to the eye as well as the taste buds. Occasionally, the dango is also colored with different flavored mochi. The Hanachi dango shown here is popular during the Sakura (cherry blossom) viewing season in Japan.



Okonomiyaki

Another popular street food item is a savory Japanese pancake with multitudes of toppings to choose from. The pancake is made with an array of ingredients and quite unlike any pancake you've had. Similar to the green onion cake it is pan-fried and contains batter mixed with sliced cabbage. The mixture helps neutralize the grease of the batter and makes for a light and crispy snack.

Takoyaki

When I first heard Takoyaki literally meant roasted octopus, I envisioned a whole live octopus on a skewer. What it really is, however, is a small ball-shaped snack coated with batter with a small piece of diced octopus inside. Despite the contrast from my vision, takoyaki remains one of my favorite street foods in Japan today. It has unique toppings and a crispy outer shell when served hot.



Yakitori

Literally meaning roasted bird, the yakitori is an infamous skewer street food made of chicken. What makes this skewered chicken so unique is that it is typically grilled over a charcoal fire and seasoned with traditional Japanese seasoning such as mirin, sake and soy sauce. For the best yakitori, buy them fresh from the grill rather than prepared by the chef *a priori*.

Kushikatsu

Similar to its twin, yakitori, kushikatsu is a type of Japanese deep-fried protein skewer wrapped in a coating of deep-fried, golden batter. Generally, kushikatsu is dipped once into a sweet, soy sauce mixture. While you might think the deep-fried batter would cause a wave of grease to flood your taste buds, it is in fact, light and crispy if cooked properly.



Tomago (Egg bites)

For students seeking for a completely different way to enjoy scrambled eggs, tomago is a great option. This Japanese omelette features a soft, tender texture that's quite unlike any scrambled eggs you've had. The three-bite tomago found in many street food stalls is similar to a sweet egg tofu but is made entirely from eggs.

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



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

The Age Old Question

Dear Barb:

I am in my late twenties and live at home with my parents and younger brother. Recently, I began dating a guy who is 50 years old. We get along great and his kids love me. We seem so compatible; we are not aware of the age difference unless we look in the mirror or someone mentions it. I have met his parents and siblings and they are okay with the age difference. The problem is that my family have not met Greg yet and I'm a little apprehensive for them to meet him. I have always been a daddy's girl and I don't think the age difference will sit well with him. My mom might be more accepting. I don't know if I should prepare my parents for meeting my boyfriend, or should I just spring it on them, hoping they won't notice the age difference. Greg has a great personality and everyone likes him, so I hope my parents like him so much that his age is a non issue for them. Do you have any advice on how I should handle this situation?

Thanks, Kara.

Hi Kara:

I don't know how long you two have been dating, but it's probably time to, at least, tell your parents about him. You could begin by telling them all the positive things, and emphasize how well you get along well. Then you might mention he is older, but I don't think it's necessary to dwell on it or tell them how much older. Usually

parents are more concerned with how their child is being treated rather than how old the person is. At your age, it is totally up to you who you date. However there are things you need to be aware of while dating an older man. You have already met his children and they like you, so that's one hurdle out of the way. Have the two of you discussed having children? Jealousy may be an issue, as you are so much younger that he may be insecure, especially when men your age are checking you out. On the plus side, he most likely will be more financially secure than men your age. In fact retirement may be figuring into his not too distant future. The bottom line is how you both feel about each other; everything else can be compromised and negotiated. So my advice would be to follow your own heart. Initially your parents may react negatively, but give them time; they will adjust, once they see everything is good between you two and that he treats you well.

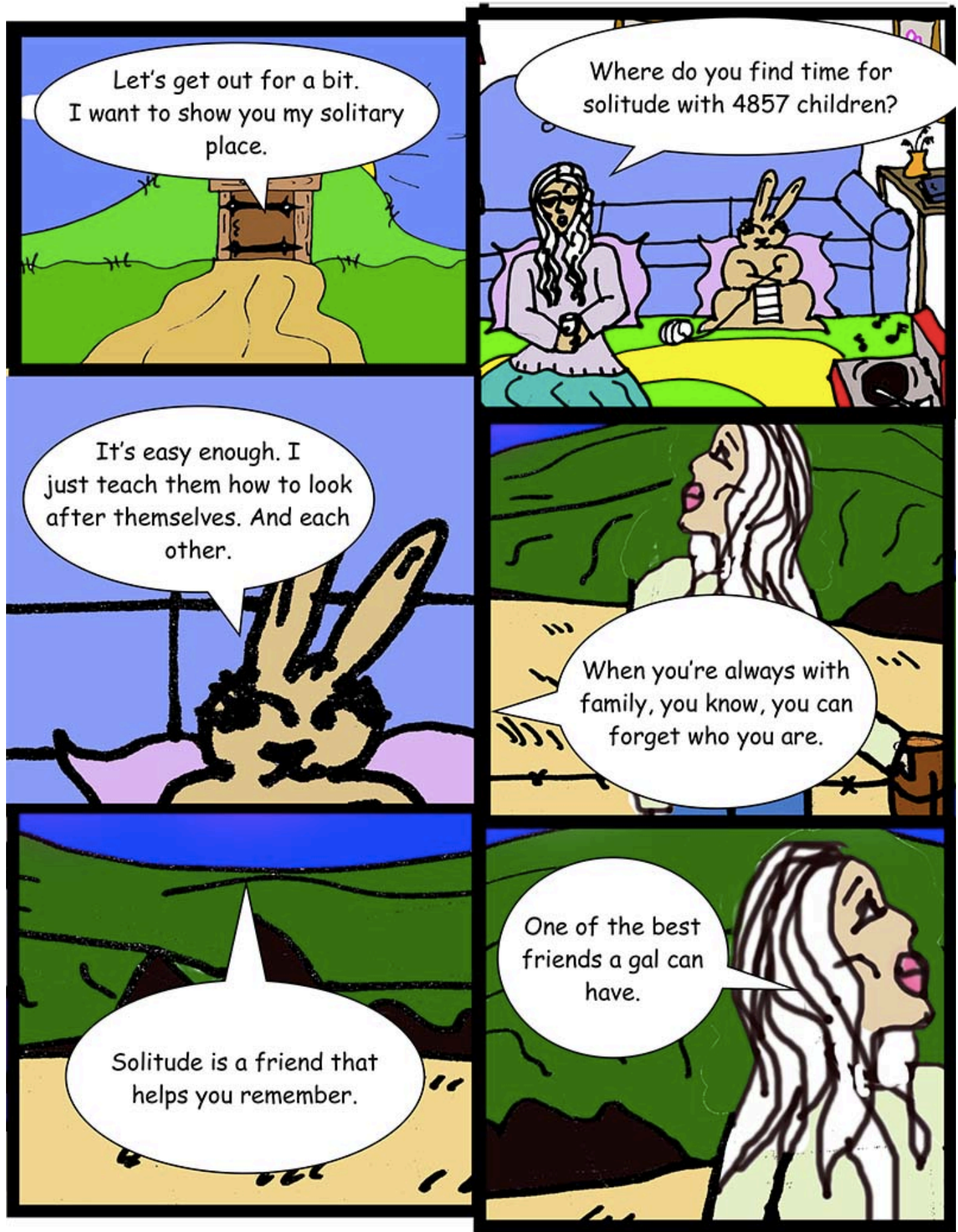
Good luck Kara and thanks for your question.

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.



Poet Maeve
A Friend Called Solitude

Wanda Waterman



The information on this page is provided by the AU Students' Union. The Voice does not create this content. Contact AUSU at services@ausu.org with any questions about this article.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **June 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Aug](#)
- **Jul 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Aug 1](#)
- **Jul 15:** [Aug degree requirements deadline](#)
- **NOTE:** No Council Meeting in July
- **July 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Sept](#)
- **Aug 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Sep 1](#)

AUSU Advocates for YOU!

Ever wondered what your AU Students' Union does for you, as a distance education student?

In addition to offering awards, bursaries, services, and discounts to AU students around the world, one of the most important things AUSU does for you is **advocacy!**

Individual Advocacy

AUSU can help you with individual concerns related to your studies at AU. If you have a concern regarding your university experience, AUSU may be able to advocate on your behalf, or provide you with information to assist you in your communications with the university.

University Advocacy

AUSU represents AU students to the University administration to ensure that the student voice is heard. This includes regular meetings with AU Deans, VP's, President, and other department heads, as well as providing student representation on the AU Board of Governors, General Faculties Council, and many other AU committees and working groups.

Provincial and Federal Advocacy

AUSU advocates on behalf of all AU students to the provincial and federal government for important topics such as increased funding, student loans programs, scholarships, fair accessibility to quality education, and many other topics important for students.

Have questions? Email us at services@ausu.org.

New AUSU Open Mic Episode

Check out the latest episode of AUSU Open Mic, your Students' Union podcast!

Episode 7: [Our AUSU President is Going to Ottawa](#)

AUSU chats about **the federal government and its impact on Athabasca University students** with Adam Brown, your chair of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations ([CASA](#)) and the VP External at the University of Alberta Students' Union.

Check out all of our AUSU Open Mic episodes on our website [here](#).

Also available for free on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), and [Pocket Casts](#) (search "AUSU Podcast").



AU Website Quick Links

Having trouble finding what you are looking for on the AU website?

Not sure what resources AU has available?

AUSU's Quick Links page can help, with easy-to-find links to AU services, resources, and more.

Check out the Quick Links on our website [here](#).



**Student
Advocacy**



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

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www.voicemagazine.org

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

Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org.

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ISSN 2561-3634