



THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 49 2020-12-18

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Signed, Sealed, & Sent

Christmas Cards in a COVID Year.

Holidays Across the Students

Beyond Christmas

Plus:

*Solstice and Chosen Fate
Chazz Bravado: Gift to You
and muchmore!*



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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
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Even I don't look at it, it's
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Volume 28, Issue 49

© 2020 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 Happy Holidays!

Karl Low



Welcome to the final issue of *The Voice Magazine* for 2020. Our writers got in the holiday mood this year, so beyond our feature interview with student and new Voice writer, Karen Lam, we have a number of holiday themed selections to help get you in the mood as well.

One of the things that AU does that often flies below notice is how it brings together people of various cultures to the same goal of learning and attaining a post-secondary degree. Even if we don't see or interact with those people, they are fellow students, and interacting with AU. It can be hard to really get a feel for how a culture not our own generally celebrates the holidays, so this week, we've got a look at the various celebrations going on this holiday season. But what does celebrating Kwanzaa or Diwali or some other holiday tradition really feel like?

That's why we've got short interviews from various students, so that you can, perhaps, see those holidays through their eyes. And in the process maybe we realize how the details that differ still add up to the same overall feelings and celebrations.

But what will you remember from this past year? It would be easy to roll your eyes at such a question, giving everything that's happened, but Barb Lehtiniemi reminds us that, despite how this year has been a particularly trying one, it hasn't all been bad. And maybe what can make the holiday season seem better is a real look back, a look back to all the things we've managed to succeed at despite the adversity thrown at us throughout the year.

And while looking back at the year, consider thinking about which articles in *The Voice Magazine* over the past year have moved you in some fashion. I still need help picking out the best of 2020 to feature early in the new year, so if you have any ideas, you can still send them to me right up until the end of this year. And after all, what else are you going to do while you're diligently keeping your social distance and your gatherings remote? You're going to be on the computer anyway, right?

Of course, that's not all we have for our final issue. Even Chazz Bravado has come in for a final appearance (although he came in late, I couldn't just let him slide by). But we've also got some ideas of some of the lessons we can take from this year to the next, advice on how to stay happy regardless, how to take a stand for your wallet, a look at how your destiny is written in the stars—depending on how you read them, and, of course, egg nog. Because you can't have a good holiday issue without some form of libation.

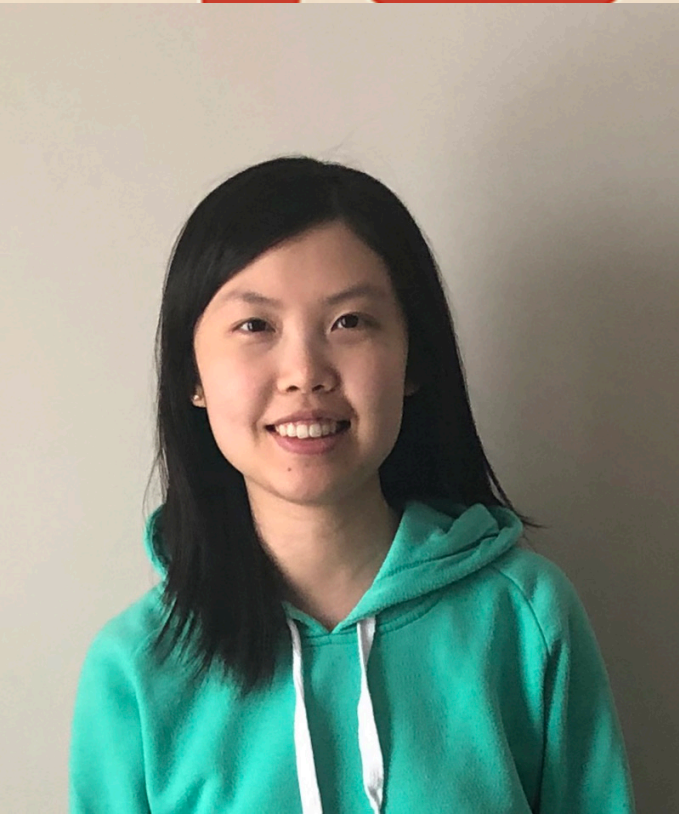
So mix yourself up a batch of Chef Corey's egg nog, throw on your comfy slippers and your Zoom-approved onesie, and settle down with this final issue of *The Voice Magazine* for 2020.

Hope you have a great holiday season, and better next year.

Enjoy the read!

Handwritten signature of Karl Low.

MINDS WE MEET



Who are your fellow students? It can feel like you are all alone in your studies, but across the nation, around the globe, students like you are also pursuing their AU education, and *The Voice Magazine* wants to bring their stories to you. If you would like to be featured next, do not hesitate to get in touch!

The Voice Magazine recently had the chance to chat with Karen Lam from Calgary, Alberta, the traditional Treaty 7 territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Îyâxe Nakoda (the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta (Region 3).

Karen is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems at AU after taking a two-year break from her educational journey. She had previously graduated with a Biology degree from the University of Calgary.

She currently works in an administrative job with Alberta Health Services, where many of her coworkers have studied at AU. She stated, "My manager said, 'If

you want to go back to school and you want to keep your job, this is a really good program, and this is a good university for you to try.' That's how I ended up here doing my second degree!"

Following graduation, Karen hopes to work "in the computer science or tech field." She revealed, "I'm not sure at the moment if I am looking toward a private or public sector job, but my whole life I've worked in public. I would like to stay, but there aren't as many opportunities in the public sector for tech."

Karen describes herself as "a homebody." She stated, "Because I've worked in the library in the past, I'm a huge bookworm. Before the pandemic started, I would read fiction, science fiction ... all sorts of types of books. When the pandemic started, the libraries all closed down, so I started streaming Netflix." She continued, "I really like K-pop and K-dramas, but I don't speak Korean, so I rely on subtitles." Karen is currently watching a Korean TV series on Netflix titled, *Start Up*, about individuals who create "their own start up tech company and the challenges they overcome." She is also learning Korean because she "has always been into K-pop music and wanted to understand the music and watch the dramas – [and] appreciate the language without . . . subtitles." (Check out Karen's latest recommendations for her favourite K-pop and K-dramas in a recent issue of *The Voice Magazine*!)

Karen's parents have had the greatest influence on her desire to learn, "because they came to Canada not knowing English ... [and gave] up their careers in Hong Kong for a better future." She continued, "Seeing how much they sacrificed for us — that was a great inspiration for me to pursue higher education and really put everything toward a good career."

Since Karen has experienced both a traditional brick and mortar education, along with an online learning environment, she feels that "that online learning definitely requires a lot more work." She also believes that in an online framework students do not simply rely on lectures and class notes, instead, truly learning and understanding the material. She elaborated, "I feel that the study habits are definitely different, but I feel like I'm learning more and understanding the material much better through online."

Although dedicated to her studies, Karen did waver about continuing her education at one point. When she finished her first degree, many people informed her "that when you start working, it's really hard to find the motivation to go back to school." She stated, "That's really true!"

Karen has worked many different types of jobs throughout her life, including the library and the non-profit sector, and realized that if she "wanted to go further, that education was really important to help me get to my destination." She continued, "Athabasca is really nice because it gives you that flexibility to keep working and continue your life while you study."

She has found communication with her tutors "pretty good." "They've been really responsive. ... Sometimes it does take longer but, as I mentioned, I did a degree at U of C, and I had professors who never responded at all ... All my tutors [at AU] do respond, some of them take a bit longer ... but most of them respond in a timely fashion."

Her favorite course so far has been COMP268: Introduction to Computer Programming (Java), which was "super challenging because I've never programmed." Although it was difficult, "by the end of the course, I learned so much."

As for non-AU related reading material, Karen is currently pursuing *Unfree Speech: The Threat to Global Democracy and Why We Must Act, Now* by Joshua Wong, a "Hong Kong activist." She stated, "Because my parents are from Hong Kong and because of all the political issues that are happening there right now, I've kind of gained some interest." Karen last had the chance to visit Hong Kong four years ago. Previously, she had visited as a baby with her family.

When asked what changes she would pursue as the new president of AU, Karen stated that she would implement "more internship opportunities for students." She explained, "A lot of people choose universities based on their internship programs" or their reputation, with the end goal being to find a job in their chosen field. "The importance of having a good internship program or networking [opportunities] is very important."

If she could meet any famous person, past or present, for lunch, Karen chose "any of the prime ministers." She revealed, "I don't think I have a specific one, but I've always thought it would be so cool to see the type of job, the type of work, a prime minister would do, especially in Canada ... during the pandemic." In particular, she would like to see "all the changes and the implementation of new funding for COVID-19." The lunch would be sushi and bubble tea!

The most valuable lesson that Karen has learned in life is to "never give up." She stated, "Through my first degree and (currently) the second degree, there are so many challenges in life, whether academically or at work. One thing is just to stay positive and never give up."

Karen's proudest moment to date has been her volunteer work managing two of the largest science competitions during her time at the University of Calgary from 2015 to 2017. As an

introvert, she found it a bit difficult, especially when she had to make a speech in front of 200 people. “That was one of my proudest moments, that I had the courage to step out on the stage and make that speech and deliver and manage that competition.”

As a final note, when asked about what distinguishes her from others, Karen chose her flexibility. She stated, “I’ve relatively flexible ... I’ve found that ... it doesn’t take me long to adapt to a new environment.” Best of luck Karen!

Natalia Iwanek is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English at Athabasca University and is also a freelance editor and writer. She can be contacted at <https://www.nataliaiwanekediting.com>.

2020: Signed, Sealed, and Sent by Mail Combining a New Tradition with an Old One

Barbara Lehtiniemi



As I sat down to prepare Christmas cards this year, I had some misgivings. I thought it important to send cards out this year—perhaps more than ever—but the cards themselves gave me pause. Jolly pre-printed words like “merry” and “happy” and wishes for “celebrations” and “holiday traditions” seemed rather out-of-step with this year’s reality.

The 2020 holiday season—including Hanukkah, Solstice, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year’s Eve, and other celebrations—will be like no other in recent memory. Holidays often mean gatherings of family and friends, but this year many people will be spending the holidays separated or isolated from their loved ones.

Wanting to reach out and connect, I decided this year I would send a letter with each card. Christmas letters are both loved and loathed. Some people

view them as boastful recountings of others’ successes, like a string of selfies rendered in prose. Perhaps some of them are, but I’ve never received such a one. Each year we receive a few letters tucked in Christmas cards, and we enjoy reading them—even look forward to them.

Sending Christmas cards has become a somewhat archaic tradition. The time it takes to prepare and send cards—not to mention the rising postage costs—discourages most people. But we still send a few dozen cards out each year.

December marks nine months since I’ve seen most of my immediate family, who live at quite a distance. We’ve been able to keep in touch virtually, but in-person visits are likely still months away. Sending a letter seemed the best substitute to physically touching those I wish we could be closer to.

Not knowing what form my letter would take, I just began writing. With many of our 2020 plans having evaporated, I thought I would be hard pressed to fill one page. In the end, I had difficulty keeping the letter to just two pages.

The intention of the letter was to provide others with a—hopefully—entertaining and informative read. But as I mentally reviewed the events of 2020, I discovered there were many

high points and positive events that I'd forgotten. Our pandemic-infected memories seem to ignore the days before mid-March, when life was semi-normal. Similarly, we easily overlook the many highlights of the year that happened in spite of—or because of—the pandemic months.

The letter underwent a few drafts until I was satisfied with it. I bought festive paper and printed out as many as I thought we'd need. When we sat down in early December to prepare our Christmas cards, we stuffed the letters in with thirty or so cards.

Perhaps some of the recipients will read them. Maybe the letters will cause them to smile, or to reflect on their own 2020 experiences. Maybe they'll return the touch with an email or a phone call, or a letter of their own.

Even if the recipients toss the letter in the trash or use it as kindling for the woodstove, the letter still served a purpose. As I wrote it, I was able to relive the best moments of the year, and be amazed by how many there were. As I wrote it, I pictured the letter's recipients: all the friends and family we haven't seen for most of the year.

I sent the letter off with best wishes and hope. Best wishes for a better 2021, and hope that soon we will all be able to enjoy the company of our loved ones again.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU graduate (BGS 2018.) She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario.

Celebrating the Holiday Season with AU Students

Natalia Iwanek



Late October to early January is a time for celebration for many AU students, including those who celebrate Diwali, Mawlid, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Eastern Orthodox/Eastern Rite Christmas, Coptic Orthodox Christmas, and El Día de Los Reyes Magos. *The Voice Magazine* recently had a chance to chat with several students about their family traditions.

- **Diwali** – Diwali is a Hindu, Sikh, and Jain celebration, which often falls in late October to November and lasts for five days. Derived from the Sanskrit word *deepavali*, meaning “rows of lighted lamps,” the celebration has different meanings for its religious communities, but “all celebrate the triumph of righteousness, often represented by light.”

Raj Kler from Calgary is currently in his last year of the Bachelor of Professional Arts in Criminal Justice. He explained that “[t]his festival is celebrated in the loving memory of Guru Hargobind Ji who was freed from imprisonment along with 52 kings due to which this day is also called *Bandi Chhorh Divas*.” He continued, “Several days

before this special day, people start cleaning their houses and business places. Celebrations for this festival are held at temples and *Gurudwara* (Sikh temples). People celebrate this by firing crackers, decorating their homes with colourful lights, and preparing different kinds of foods. On this day, neighbours and loved ones exchange sweets with each other.”

Raj remembers Diwali yearly with family and friends in India. He stated, “We would go to market and buy crackers and start firing crackers around 9 pm and I’d go till 1-2 am in the morning. It was a great fun.” As for his favourite Diwali meal, Raj chose “yellow coloured sweet rice with homemade yogurt.”

Aman Sahi from Airdrie, Alberta is currently completing a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. When asked about a typical Diwali day, Aman stated that it entails “getting up early in the morning to start preparing for the evening, going to friends and family house to give gifts and sweets, and also receiving lots of gifts and sweets, kids start cracking fireworks in the morning.” There is also “going to the temple to light the first *Diya* and then coming home to start *laxmi Pooja* and lighting *diyas*. Lots and lots of firecrackers and food.”

Aman continued, “My favourite memories of Diwali included helping my mother prepare sweets and snacks for the evening in advance. Giving lots of dry fruits boxes and gifts to friends and family. Lighting up the home with sparkling *diyas* and making *rangoli* near the front door. The sounds of firecrackers, laughing children, colorful lights would fill the air after sunset during Diwali.” As for the holiday meal? “Everything my mother cooks is my favorite but if I have to pick it is *poori chane* and *gajar ka halwa*.”

- **Mawlid** – Mawlid, or Mawlid al-Nabi, celebrates the birth of the Prophet Mohammed in Islam. This year, the date fell on October 28 or twelfth day of the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal by the lunar calendar. On this day, Muslims gather at mosque, as well as listening to public speeches about the life and teachings of the Prophet.
- **Hanukkah** – Also known as the Feast of Dedication, Festival of Lights, or Feast of the Maccabees, Hanukkah begins this year on Friday, December 11 to Friday, December 18 and lasts for eight days. In particular, the celebration “reaffirms the ideals of Judaism and commemorates in particular the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem by the lighting of candles on each day of the festival.”
- **Kwanzaa** – Celebrated from December 26 to January 1, Kwanzaa “honors African heritage and celebrates family, community and culture.” Taken from the Swahili phrase, *matunda ya kwanza*, or first fruits, Kwanzaa was created during the 1960s in the United States by Maulana Karenga, to commemorate the stripped ethnic history of Black Americans. Seven principles known collectively as *Nguzo Saba* are celebrated, with one principle each day, including Unity, Self-Determination, Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith.
- **La Befana** – Throughout Italy on January 5, the eve of the Epiphany, children await a benevolent old woman, who leaves gifts for those who have been well-behaved.

Hannah Covassi, a Bachelor of General Studies, stated, “Sometimes I’d celebrate at home and other times I’d visit my Nonna with my cousins. The morning would start out with either my Nonna or mom telling me the story of the Befana kind of like how parents and grandparents tell their kids about Santa Claus.” She continued, “[T]hen they’d say that they saw her through the window on her broom the night before and left us gifts but we’d have to find them. So we’d go around the house looking for the gifts (they were usually hidden in a closet) and then open them. Afterward the hunt we’d have *pandoro* (Italian sweet bread) and talk about the Befana. My favourite memory was the 1 year that my mom fooled me by hiding the gift in a fake block of coal. Now as an adult my mom and I either hide each other’s gifts or play a guessing game about what gifts we got each other, then eat *pandoro*. I’ll also call my Nonna or visit her to wish her a happy La Befana like other families wish each other Merry Christmas but the gift hunt is mostly for children.”

- **El Día de Los Reyes Magos** – Also known as Three Kings Day or the Epiphany, El Día de Los Reyes Magos takes place on January 6. Believed to be the day when the three kings gave gifts to baby Jesus, it is celebrated throughout Latin America, as well as Spain. In Mexico, one of the most important aspects of the day is eating the *Rosca de Reyes*, or the “Wreath of the Kings,” an oval shaped cake. Whoever finds a hidden figurine of Jesus must make tamales for the family on February 2 or El Día de la Candelaria.
- **Coptic Orthodox Christmas** – Celebrated by communities from Ethiopia and Egypt, the celebration falls on January 7, based on the Julian calendar.
- **Eastern Orthodox/Eastern Rite Christmas** – Similarly, this celebration also follows the Julian calendar, often taking place on January 6 and 7 throughout Ukraine, Russia, Montenegro, Serbia, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Moldova.

Milica Markovic, a Master of Arts - Interdisciplinary Studies (MA-IS) student from Toronto stated, “My family isn't religious (I'm agnostic, and my parents are atheists), but we still do enjoy heading to the church to enjoy bean stew with other people, listen to the choir, light candles for the living and deceased, and take a *badnjak* [a branch from a yule log] for the drive home. There's just something so peaceful about the atmosphere, and I love that it brings people together regardless of faith. I don't think there's anything weird with wanting to stay connected to your culture because there are still some great values/character-building moments to be retained from that.”

She continued, “I actually really enjoyed bringing non-Orthodox friends to church and showing them our customs (although there are some differences between how Montenegrins and Serbians do things so it can be a learning opportunity for us too!). I'm a very curious person myself who likes to learn and embrace other cultures so I would want someone to do the same for me.” As for her favourite food, she stated, “Russian salad all the way! I love making it, goes with anything really.”

Marija Milenkovic-Delorey a Bachelor of Professional Arts in Communications Studies, from Thorold, Ontario stated, “We celebrate Christmas on January 6 and 7, with Christmas Eve being Jan 6 and Christmas Day on the 7. In the evening of the 6, we attend a church service and collect the *badnjak* (a tree branch that is kept in the home for the year and is supposed to bring good health, luck, etc. to the household) then go to my aunt's house for a supper consisting of fish, baked beans, and other vegetables. Dessert is fresh and dried fruit, and there is no meat or alcohol at this meal. Christmas day starts with opening gifts and stockings, and having breakfast, and

AU-thentic Events **Upcoming AU Related Events**

Bannock and a Movie December Edition: Birth of a Family

Dec 1 to Dec 31

Online

Hosted by AU Nukskahtowin

indigenous.athabascau.ca/bannock/index.php

Access through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted

Holiday closures

Athabasca University

Closed Thur, Dec 24 to Sun, Jan 3, inclusive
 Reopens Mon, Jan 4, 8:30 am MST

More info at:

news.athabascau.ca/announcements/holiday-closure-2020/

AU Library

Last day to order materials: Thur, Dec 17

Closed Wed, Dec 23 to Sun, Jan 3 inclusive

Reopens Mon, Jan 4, 8:30 am MST

More info at: library.athabascau.ca/page/ann

AUSU

Closed Sat, Dec 19 to Sun, Jan 3, inclusive

Reopens Mon, Jan 4, 9:00 am MST

More info at: www.ausu.org/contact/

then we have a big family dinner consisting of chicken soup, cabbage rolls (*sarma*), potatoes, assorted vegetables, and salad. Sometimes we will also have turkey or ham, with stuffing, mashed potatoes, etc. Dessert is the traditional *cesnica*, which is a dish similar to baklava, and has a coin baked into the layers. The dessert is cut into squares, and everyone chooses a square to eat. The person who finds the coin is expected to have good luck in the coming year. We also usually have quite a lot of other cookies, squares, and cake. We're a family of bakers who never seem to have enough dessert! After dessert, we open the remaining gifts with our extended family, and usually have Turkish coffee and just chat and enjoy each other's company.

She continued, "My favourite Christmas memories are from Christmas Eve, when we gather for our cozy family supper. I love my aunt's house, it is so beautiful and welcoming and she always has the best Christmas decorations. Back at home, placing all of the gifts under the tree once our daughter goes to bed is also magical, and I love the anticipation of waiting for Christmas morning. It's just such a warm, cozy, and comforting time to spend with loved ones."

As for her favourite holiday meal, Marija chose cabbage rolls. "We only typically have them at Christmas, so it's a special treat, and it reminds me of my childhood Christmases in Serbia. I also love all of the cookies and desserts."

- **Eastern Orthodox Christmas** is also celebrated in Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece, however, following the Gregorian calendar.

Roxana Popescu, a "non-program student enrolled in some courses that are prerequisites for nursing school" from Bucharest, Romania stated, "My family enjoys Eastern Orthodox Christmas, celebrating Jesus Christ's birth on the 25, 26, and 27 of December, unlike our neighbours from Ukraine or, moving further, Russia that celebrate according to the old calendar on the 7 of January." She continued, "We start by fasting 6 weeks before Christmas to prepare to celebrate Jesus Christ while avoiding meat and dairy products and focusing on doing good deeds. This fasting is a way of remembering Moses' 40 days of fasting, in which, in the end, he received the Ten Commandments from God."

When asked to describe a typical celebration, she stated, "A few days before Christmas, we go Christmas tree shopping, and we decorate it at home with the whole family. I remember it was always a time to fight with my sister over every decoration's place in the tree. Still, in the end, we always reconciled listening to Christmas carols songs in our living room, sitting and enjoying the dark room lit only by the Christmas tree lights that used to have a very 'dancing' pattern of lights." She continued, "On Christmas Eve, we all cook different tasty meals, such as sausages, Christmas pudding, aspic, Romanian beef salad, and Christmas sweetbread. My grandmother has a brick oven where she bakes sweet bread; it tastes divine every time she does it."

In addition, "On the first day of Christmas, we call our loved ones, wish them 'Merry Christmas,' visit our relatives, and enjoy the time spent together. When I was a child, we went carolling on the morning of the 25 of December and enjoyed the cookies, apples, oranges, and bagels we received, but not before opening the gifts Santa Clause put under the Christmas tree. However, 2020 Christmas will be different, spent isolated at home to contain the spread of coronavirus. On a typical Christmas day, we all gather around at lunch and eat what we cooked the previous days. Furthermore, all Christmas days are spent relaxing with family and visiting our grandparents and other close family members as we all have days off from school or work."

When asked about her favourite memories, she stated, "I remember the days fondly when it snowed, and I went carolling with my friends around the neighbourhood, then the joyous moments of gift unwrapping, the paper-tearing sounds still making me giddy as an adult, and the

moments we ate too many candies and cookies. I think that those moments spent in cold weather, exhaling foggy breath, trick-or-treating with my friends while it snowed made me prefer winter and move to Canada to enjoy more days of snow.”

As for her favourite holiday meal, Roxana revealed, “The beef salad and Romanian Christmas sweet bread to satisfy my sweet tooth are my favourite holiday meal. Moreover, all the edible presents Santa Claus brought as a kid were a meal of their own. There was even a competition that consisted of who finishes their candies first between my sister and me. One of the perks of Christmas, besides family time, is the tasty food we all cook.”

From your friends at *The Voice Magazine*, we wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season!

Natalia Iwanek is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English at Athabasca University and is also a freelance editor and writer. She can be contacted at <https://www.nataliaiwanekediting.com>.

The Struggling Student Rants Your Wallet vs. You

Angela Pappas

Holiday Stress Shopping



It's no secret: being an adult equals stress. Some adults are more stressed than others, some handle it better than others, and some prefer to pretend they're Peter Pan and hope for the best. Then, once a year, you have your “festive stress” to add to the list. Whether you celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza, or nothing at all, it's impossible not to get caught up in the commotion called “December.” The holidays *should* remind us of sparkly lights, family and friends, brisket and latkes, wrapping paper and ornate decorations. But the sad reality is, they usually don't.

This time of year not only intensifies any pre-existing anxiety, it also creates stressful situations out of nowhere. Things like finding the money to finance gifts, finding the time to go shopping for these gifts, accommodating everyone's wishes, and cooking up the perfect meal – all while trying to juggle work deadlines and AU assignments – can be enough to make us all go mad! However, whether we want to admit it or not, the torture is self-imposed. We try to pull off the perfect day by going through weeks of hell, only so we can post about it on social media or hear our family brag about how many

goodies they ate or how many new things they get to add to the existing pile of things. To make things worse, the strain we self-impose to pull off a picture-perfect holiday can be overwhelming the best of years. Now add COVID-19 to the recipe. I won't get into the details; we've all heard how this pandemic has affected everyone's mental health and anxiety. What I will get into the details of, is the anxiety you're imposing on your poor wallet!

Something to think about: our wallets typically cringe at the sound of “Christmas” during the best of times. Credit cards go into the red in an attempt to convince that Santa is real, and that Tommy has been a good boy all year. Mommy and daddy will have to prove this, of course, with a \$2,000

PlayStation or Xbox purchased from some back-alley re-seller. I'm not a parent – I cannot relate, so I try not to judge. But when I first heard how much money friends and family were spending on their children over the holidays, in an attempt to brighten their spirits, I admit I had second thoughts about how bright they really are (guys, if you're reading this... I still love you).

There are families out there struggling to keep the power on and keep food on the table—literally. Mass layoffs from COVID-19 are no secret. The Globe and Mail recently published some of the results of their annual poll, surrounding holiday shopping habits. Another national survey by Credit Canada, called the annual Reality Check Index, showed that one-in-four Canadians, from coast-to-coast, will have to skip Christmas altogether this year and that one-in-ten Canadians aren't even sure they'll be able to pay their household bills. So, if you're feeling alone in all this, know that you are not. We all need to be patient and make rational decisions as we wait to ride this out. Christmas can still be magical, even without the baked ham and PlayStations. If you don't believe me, I simply ask that you step back and think about it for a minute—from both an emotional perspective and as a reality check.

More Meaning, Less Stuff

Kids are messy. You ask them to do something—fun or not—chances are there will be plenty of screaming, crying, laughter, giggling, resistance, snot, and possibly some dried-up ketchup and finger paint along the walls. Still, most kids will walk out of any situation smiling and smug, like the proud Power Rangers they are, with an attitude ranging from “bring it on suckers!” to “can we do that again?” The more imagination, the better. Trust me when I say that years later, if not the very next week, the screaming and crying, the snot, the siblings' hair-pulling contest, and eating frozen leftovers or a ten-course gourmet dinner on Christmas Eve will long be forgotten. What will live on in their minds, until they're back in diapers again decades later, will be the hugs, the giggles, and everyone together in the same room. I know that's what I remember. Who gives a shit about the \$200 She-Ra Crystal Castle set—which, by the way, got torn to pieces the minute it was taken out of the box? I just wish my cousins were all here to laugh and fight with! This holiday season try to put your worries aside and simply spend time with those you love. Truly spend time with them—don't watch TV or mindlessly scroll through social media while sitting next to them. Put down those phones and turn off the TV. Yes, there will be screaming and crying. But that will be over the moment you bring out the blankets and chairs. What are you going to do with blankets and chairs? Build a fort, of course!

Reality Check

Throughout generations, all kids have been known to be bratty from time to time. Heck, I was spoiled rotten to the core most of the time! However, each generation gripes about how those succeeding them are too coddled. I'm not sure if there are any actual studies out there, confirming or denying this. I am sure that it makes sense. 10-year-olds in 2020 are definitely not as “tough” as the kids raised in the 1950s and they definitely have a more entitled attitude than 10-year-olds did in the 1980s. This doesn't negate the value, of course, in any child protection standards and legislation now in place. But the sad reality is, we now try to buy our children's love and make up for lost time with them more than ever. Do their eyes light up when they see that new toy on the store shelfum, sorry, on Amazon? You bet they do. So did yours, 10, 20, 30 years ago, maybe even today. Did that toy make up for missed time with mom, dad, grandma, or grandpa? I'll leave that for you to answer. We think that the more things we buy them, the happier our children are. I'm sure that most of us, however, can agree that *things* don't fill the void in our own hearts—so why should they fill any void in our children's hearts? This year, new family traditions can be created, such as setting a limit on the number of gifts or

designating one gift from Santa and only one from both parents, all the while adding a weekly Sunday family night and sticking to it all year round.

Another idea is to give your children the option of an actual “thing” or the opportunity to do something in the future that they have long had their hearts set on, such as going to the local zoo next summer. Also, if parents are struggling this holiday season to put food on the table, they shouldn’t be scared to sit down and have an honest conversation with their children and tell them what’s going on. Kids are usually much smarter than we think. They likely already know that something’s wrong, so don’t be frightened at the thought of ‘burdening’ them. It’s also really important they understand that it’s not all about spending money. If they don’t immediately have the reaction you expected, don’t let the guilt consume you; they will eventually realize they need to be a bit more understanding. Plus, most children don’t have Young Sheldon’s temperament, they have trouble regulating their emotions. Heck, most adults do too!

Holiday shopping deserves its own branding of hell, with or without a pandemic looming over us. I know people that start shopping in June, hoarding junk away until they can surprise their loved ones in December, with yet another pair of socks or ugly sweater (Really, you shouldn’t have). Why do we feel obliged to buy things for others? Gift-giving isn’t as simple as we think; it’s a complex, emotional, process. It should be about showing appreciation, not obligation.

I would much rather prefer the luxury of time with you, laughing over memories of youthful ludicrousness, while sipping on a glass of smooth white. The best present I received this year, and it’s not even December 25th yet, was a thoughtful, handwritten letter from a friend across the country. It’s rare to even receive actual Christmas cards in the mail anymore, never mind handwritten letters. We’ve lost the true feeling of connection, which is what the holidays are all about, and I’m not talking about Wi-Fi. This year’s isolation should make people realize what’s truly important more than ever before.

Angela Pappas is a part-time AU Certificate student who enjoys learning and discussing anything personal finance and personal development related.



Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of The Voice Magazine.

The beginning of winter is almost upon us, so hunker down with a hot beverage and cozy socks for a pair of vintage winter tales.

Or was it "beer deer"? Writer Bill Pollett recounts how a merry lark to find a tree slid into misadventure. "I find myself half-running down the icy road, trying to keep down a rising sensation of panic, my boots nearly slipping out from under me with every step." Lost & Found—A Christmas Tale, December 15, 2004.

It happened in Winterpeg. Another classic tale by Bill Pollett, this one dipping into fantasy. "Remembering old fairy tales, she put her lips to his for an enchanted kiss. They froze there, like a tongue to a Winnipeg February lamppost." Porkpie Hat—Icebound: A Winter Tale, December 19, 2008.

Chazz Bravado
My Gift to You

Wanda Waterman



Hey there,
chicky-poops!
Yeah,
I know
it's been
a tough year...

Hardest
of all
for those
of us
who love
dating.



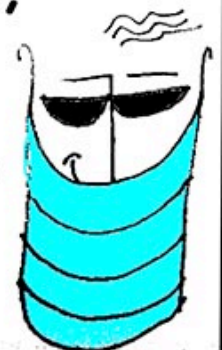
So my
Christmas
gift to all
of you
is to fake
my age
and profession.

Yep, I'm
gonna be
one of
the first
in line
for the
vaccine.



Oh, no,
don't
thank me!
Just leave me
your number.

Happy holidays,
chicky-poops,
and may 2021
be The Year
of the Chazz!



Cloud Computing A High Paying Career without Post-Secondary?

Alek Golijanin



Technology has changed the way the global workforce looks and operates. It has been decades since we last saw high school graduates find good paying jobs immediately after their high school graduation. However, big tech is now also threatening to change the traditional learning path for high school graduates which has the potential to have dire consequences for colleges and universities around the world.

Cloud Computing

Cloud computing is the practice of using a network of remote servers hosted on the Internet to store, manage, and process data, rather than a local server or a personal computer. The cloud computing sector has boomed over the past few years largely due to how it eliminates accessibility issues that once plagued businesses. Organizations that provide cloud computing as a service to consumers also ensure adequate supports are in place for any and all matters that may arise, which can range from security-related concerns to technical difficulties.

One of the game-changers of this technology is that individuals do not need to have graduated from a college or university to work in the field of cloud computing. Often all that is needed to start a career in this field is a certificate, which will vary depending on the platform that the cloud services are being offered with, and these jobs are in high demand. There are various platforms that offer cloud computing services, but the most popular ones tend to be Amazon Web Services (AWS), Microsoft Azure, or Google's Cloud. When compared to the tens of thousands of dollars it costs to obtain a college or university degree, these certifications are rather inexpensive as they typically range from \$200 to \$500 for the testing. Courses for them can be found at a range of quality and pricing online, with some being under \$20 when taken singly. Would be students, however, would be well advised to find reviews of any courses they are thinking of paying for.

Cloud Computing as A First Job

For the first time in decades, individuals with only their high school diploma can secure high paying jobs in cloud computing, all thanks to tech. When comparing the potential to find a job with the cost of obtaining an education, getting certified in AWS is cheap, yet it provides a starting pay close to \$30 per hour. A year's worth of work with just a high school diploma and AWS certification would see someone make just under \$60,000. The prospect of having no student debt and a starting yearly salary of \$60,000 is one that is too good to ignore.

Are Colleges and Universities at Risk?

Nobody ever imagined a world where Blockbuster would self-implode after the emergence of digital streaming services like Netflix, or how photography giants like Fujifilm and Kodak cameras would be supplanted by the cameras in cellphones. However, tech is unpredictable and its capacity to change the world in which we live in continues to grow and because of that it is almost impossible to plan around.

While I do not see colleges or universities going anywhere, I do see them missing out on large amounts of revenue by overlooking some of these tech-induced trends. Cloud computing careers do not require a 2, 3 or 4-year degree, but the path to certification would benefit from a designed learning curriculum. It would also be a significant upgrade considering that many current pre-exam training systems are being offered by “side hustlers,” who lack the experience in curriculum design. Keeping up with tech is much easier than playing catch-up, strategic teams have never been more important, and they will determine how colleges and universities react.

A combat sports fanatic, Alek is a fourth year business student who like to read research papers for fun.

Fly on the Wall

Jason Sullivan

Solstice and Our Chosen Fate: Written in Planets, Appearing as Stars



Winter Solstice 2020: it's cold, it's dark, and it's isolated. As the sun's light declines to its nadir we might wonder what there even is to celebrate. Like receiving an outstanding course mark by email and then looking around and realizing with a sigh that nothing tangible has changed in our immediate environs, the turning of our hemisphere to its furthest angle from the sun may feel like just one more misery added to a difficult year. But wait! This year Jupiter and Saturn cross paths in our sky and appear to be so far into each other's social distancing bubble that the two seem as one.

Just as the view we take of our academic progress depends on adopting the right attitude, the perspective of our earthling gaze gives us this unique optical illusion commonly known as a Christmas Star. The last time Jupiter and Saturn aligned in such proximity we earthlings couldn't see it and the time before that was a whopping eight hundred years ago. Now that's something worth taking a nocturnal study break drive to the country to check out. Or, failing that, just knowing that this unique event is out there in the solar system can warm our hearts. There's magical miracles everywhere if choose to look at life and learning that way!

How We See Is What We See

The psychologist Carl Jung stated that the ebbs and flows of life are something we react to according to our chosen methods; these may not be conscious, but they are real in their consequences. "It is rather crude and misleading to say that we 'see what we want to see.' Rather, it is far more accurate to say that we 'see how we want to see.'" If we want this year's Solstice to matter because of the rare conjunction of planets then it will. Simple as that. It's like grabbing an extra hour of essay proofreading before dinner instead of lollygagging on social media. So 2020 doesn't have to wind down with lockdown restrictions and dim horizons after all. Yet this meeting of the planets isn't simply a moment to be enjoyed for a number of nights; as with any

good academic topic, the meaning of an event like the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction is subject to debate and even some recriminations along the way.

Epiphanies Taking the Christmas Cake

Eight centuries is a blink in the eye of the cosmos and the sight in the southwest sky (for most of us) of this year's Christmas Star invites us to don our critical thinking goggles. There's more than one way to see what we see, after all. For Christians, the appearance of Jupiter and Saturn invites meaningful thoughts about how we can view our interstellar realm as a grand canvas of divinity. A thinker named Oswald Chambers suggested that "when we choose deliberately to obey him, then, with all his almighty power, he will tax the remotest star and the last grain of sand to assist us."

The *he* is God, of course, but from this angle you don't have to take his word for it. Even astronomer Johannes Kepler, more noted for giving astrological readings than for being a dogmatic Christian, suggested that the mythical Christmas star in Bethlehem during Jesus' birth may have been a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus. Perhaps when celestial objects align we feel impelled to seek out events to match? Here again is that AU magic: if we see our day as ripe for success then we will steamroll that coursework like honour roll recipients. We get what we want if we believe in ourselves. Maybe this solstice is the advent of our greatest successes to date!

Solstice as a Return to Our Roots

Another way of seeing solstice is as a reminder that, in deep cosmic time, it's the universe that calls the shots in a way that a tick-tocking watch (or a Tik-Tok cell phone app), cannot. Solstice is famous for being the baseline for countless cultural celebrations around the world and throughout history. Indeed, for most of human history the stars were an accompaniment to every clear evening and were inseparable from lived experience. The theorist John Zerzan notes that "for thousands of generations humans rose at daybreak and slept after the sun went down, basking in the glories of sunrise, sunset, and starry skies. Half a millennium ago, city bells and clocks announced an increasingly ordered and regulated daily life, the reign of urban timekeeping. With modernity, lived time disappears; time becomes a resource, an objectified materiality. Measured, reified, time isolates the individual in the force field of deepening division and separation, ever diminishing wholeness" (Zerzan, 51). We AU inhabitants of modernity would do well to re-calibrate our mental sundials during the depths of winter too; there need not be darkness in our study souls to go with the shadowy realm outside our doors.

As distance students we depend on our inner inertia to drive us forward in our studies. But our distance from the sun, and proverbially from the light of motivation, could always be, well, more distantiated. Distance is a relative concern, after all. Even as our sense of time may waver as the days reach their shortest duration and our motivation evaporates like a too-early sunset over the horizon, it pays to remember that conditions could always be darker.

Perspective is the mother of positive thinking. So, this Solstice, let's remember our Canadian far North: "in Grise Fiord, a port on the south coast of Ellesmere Island well within the Canadian Arctic Circle, the sun disappears on October 31 and is not seen again until February 11, more than a hundred days later. In Alert, the northernmost settlement in the Canadian Arctic on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island, the polar night lasts more than 130 days. But just a little more than five hundred miles north of Alert, at the North Pole, the polar night lasts 179 days." (Dewdney, 266). Half a year of dark, forsooth! And we down toward the 49th parallel, and points further south, have a mere few weeks of dimness to contend with.

Santa and Solstice Around the World

It's no wonder Santa and his trusty reindeer head South for the 25th, they need some sun! In fact, many cultures associate solstice with the return of longer days. From Persia, where the festival is known as Shab-e Yalda, to Arizona, where the Hopi name their ritual Soyal, the end of sun's descent is hailed as a reminder that the apparent resurrection of our life-giving orb brings with it incrementally longer days and the promise of spring and renewed flourishing (Team Scary Mommy, 2020). And so, unlike people who bask in their misery all the livelong year, we AU students can enjoy solstice knowing that even on the darker days our minds embody blooming potential.

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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.



How to Be Happy—Even in Soul-Crushing Times

Marie Well



If We don't need to mentally hear, throughout the day, a choir of angels singing, "Oh come let us adore him" in order to be happy, although it helps, and it helps a lot. We can settle for making our hearts pure, even in soul-crushing times, times when angelic song seems distant.

Here are five ways to feel happiness—pure blissful joy—from *The Positive Trait Thesaurus*. Good for even when the skies darken, as they all do, at times, for all of us.

Happiness is felt with "friendliness and politeness"

To never feel negative toward other people, quickly think about their guardian angels, those benevolent mythical beings, who, as spiritualists claim, explode with unwavering, unconditional love toward each of us. According to Lorna Byrne,

an author who claims to have seen guardian angels since birth, these angels are enamored with us, without exception, no matter what deeds we've done.

So, when we imagine other people's guardian angels, we should see only a euphoric bond of love. By looking at others through that lens, we grow friendlier toward them, more compassionate, more merciful, more polite, more human.

Happiness surges with "loving others unconditionally"

I believe we are born in this world to embark on life's greatest mission: to learn to love others unconditionally. To love unconditionally, we must constantly forgive, never judge, and always

celebrate others' best traits, putting a positive spin on every deed, even the more troubling ones. Everyone, without exception, has many fine traits—and many faults worth overlooking.

When we look at an unkempt man who is shouting obscenities, wearing a hospital gown, and pushing a shopping cart of pop bottles, if we love unconditionally, we might think, "That's me in another life. And I'm a touch entrepreneurial, aren't I?" Follow up such thoughts with a visual of a guardian angel pouring love on that soul. That seemingly lost soul is more than worthy of love, just like the rest of us. Relish in that emotional bliss. When we love others, even through small gestures, we feel deep-rooted pleasure.

Happiness ignites by "not taking life or people for granted"

It strikes me that our families are with us for a reason. I even heard claims from spiritualists, such as angel-seeing Lorna Byrne, that we choose our parents before we're born. According to this claim, the parents we choose are perfect for us, perfect in helping us learn our most valuable life lessons.

To not take our families, friends, neighbors, even enemies for granted, we must learn how to love them, no matter what befalls us, no matter how disturbing or soul-crushing life may seem. It takes only one person to rekindle a loving bond.

Happiness blossoms from "being willing to commit to the people and causes that one cares about"

To commit to another soul, we must not call it quits the moment things sour, no matter how hopeless we may feel. A mother might endure her son's mental illness, so much so, she lets him reside with her, tending to his needs, long after he scrawls profanities across her walls in felt pen. A mother's love can endure most anything. And a husband may endure his wife's cheating with countless men, or her drug addiction, or her spending the household into bankruptcy. When circumstances go dire, our true spirit gets tested. Do we remain committed to the people we love, or do we quit? If we quit, we'll likely continue the same pattern, but with someone else. But to truly commit, we must put aside all negative thoughts, zeroing in on only beneficial ones. I believe enduring brings the greatest rewards, especially everlasting, spiritual gifts, such as loyalty and selflessness.

Happiness skyrockets by "looking at the bright side when something bad happens"

When something bad happens, find a positive spin, one that leads to compassion and empathy for everyone involved, even for our enemies. But what if something unthinkable happens? How can we be happy then? In every dark sky is a glimmering star. We embrace happiness through zeroing in on all the beauty in the world. We embrace happiness by showing kindness toward everyone, even toward our rivals. We embrace happiness by explaining away heartache with empathy.

One golden way to feel happy, or at least sentimental, is to run through a list of every person we've ever encountered. Think of how we, today, love those people, every one of them, even if the relationship soured. By doing this exercise often, happiness grows, like a watered rose bush.

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Homemade is Better Egg Nog

Chef Corey



It is the oddest thing, I could not find eggnog this year, no matter where I looked. If you found some and have enjoyed it, that's fantastic. But in my case necessity birthed some looking around online and through several of my cookbooks to find some decent recipes. The following is a hybrid of the information I found. Most recipes are consistent in that they call for 4-6 egg yolks, and 1/3 – 1 cup of sugar, 1 – 3 cups of cream and or a mixture of heavy cream and milk. Accent flavourings called for a variety of powders or extracts. It just so happened that I had the actual ingredients, so I chose to use those instead.

The history of eggnog is fascinating, as it turns out. There is quite a dispute between historians as to the origins: some say it's a British term, and some think it's American; regardless, they agree that it's based on a medieval beverage called Posset. Posset was made from hot milk curdled with wine or ale and then had spices added.

The drink has been popular around this time of year for a long time, and several influential people in history have made variations, including George Washington whose recipe can be found on Wikipedia. There was

also a drink called a Tom and Jerry, which used rum or brandy and was served warm. Time magazine points out that several countries around the world have their own variations as well. In South America, it is popular to use bourbon, and in Puerto Rico, they use coconut milk and call the beverage 'coquito'.

I also stumbled upon an unexpected but not surprising detail about commercially made eggnog. And if you like a good Eggnog Latte as I do, maybe start making your own. According to Ethan Trex of Mental Floss in the USA, it is permissible for eggnog only to contain 1% by weight of egg yolk solids. I could not verify what the acceptable ingredients are in Canada. I was able to find a few brands here in Alberta that we sell; they list things like artificial and natural flavours, frozen egg yolks, modified milk ingredients. Those were after milk, cream, and sugar.

I hope I have made a case for you to try and make your own. It's so much better! I heat the milk and cream and use a whole vanilla bean and cinnamon stick in this recipe, but powdered cinnamon and *pure* vanilla extract are acceptable. I say pure because of one of the ingredients in artificial vanilla. Google the ingredients in artificial vanilla extract, I dare you, but I'm going to warn you it's not good!

I hope you enjoy this holiday treat, and cheers!



Eggnog

Ingredients:

6 egg yolks
½ cup sugar
1 cup heavy cream
2 cups milk
1 vanilla bean - split
1 cinnamon stick
Sprinkle of nutmeg

Directions:

- 1) Heat the cream, milk, vanilla bean, and cinnamon stick in a pot over medium-high heat.
- 2) Add the egg yolks and sugar to a mixing bowl, and whisk.
- 3) Once the cream mixture was warmed up to about 100C, ladle a small amount of it into the eggs while whisking constantly. Go slowly, so you don't scramble the eggs. Add a teaspoon to a tablespoon at most to start until you've added about half a cup.
- 4) Once the mixture has warmed up, add it back into the cream. Again, go slow at first, adding a small stream of liquid to start with and whisking constantly.
- 5) Once both mixtures are in the pot, heat the liquid to 160C over medium heat. You will still whisk it, but you can slow down and stir more than agitate.
- 6) Once the eggnog is at 160C, transfer it to a container with a lid and refrigerate until it has cooled completely.
- 7) Add your favourite mixes to it and enjoy!



Chef Corey is a student in business management who first graduated from NAIT's Culinary Arts Program in 2007



Four Personal Lessons Learned from COVID-19 for 2021

Xine Xu



On As the year draws to a close, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the lessons we learned from the year. While it has been a tumultuous year, there are many takeaways that have been valuable for my personal growth. For many AU students who have experienced varied degrees of emotional upheaval during this pandemic, this may also hold true.

Focus on mental health

The pandemic truly helped people realize the importance of mental health. Self care became increasingly important as the social lockdown measures were implemented nation-wide. The uncertainty that came in March threw our regular routines off-course and certainly challenged me to stay motivated, optimistic and healthy. For myself, I connected with friends virtually and learned to have check-ins with myself from time to time. In hindsight, the lack of motivation may have been some early signs of mental health fall-out and without regular meditation sessions, I may have brushed it off. If you're ever in doubt, check in with a medical

professional and get the help you need.

Spend time with those who matter:

Sometimes in the bustle of life, we are constantly meeting new people, growing our acquaintances and forgetting to take that weekend off to spend with the sister or the grandpa. It's only at times when distractions fall to a minimum do we realize that there are never enough hours in a day to spend quality time with a loved one. This realization came suddenly for me in March as my social circles dwindled and activities halted to a stop. I found this time to be difficult, being the extraverted social butterfly I felt obligated to restrict my networks to very few people. But then as time passed, I grew fond of connecting with my grandma on Skype and found joy in cooking with my sister. There were so many things to be grateful for and narrowing your social circles down can actually help build stronger connections than ever before.



Letting go of materialistic needs:

Previous to COVID-19, the consumer spending index skyrocketed for many years leaving many individuals with crippling debt. I found that since the start of the pandemic, I began to take a closer look at my own discretionary spendings (expenses related to "wants" as opposed to "needs"). Particularly, the pandemic's significant influence on employment and economic conditions have also triggered this realization.

Learning to adapt to change

If I learned anything from this year, it would be the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus' quote, "change is constant". While prior to March, I had a particular life routine that

both challenged and satisfied my need for self-improvement, it was quickly dismantled with the start of the pandemic. The stress of transitioning to online classes and the sudden elimination of



all my extra-curricular activities was mind-numbing at first. However, like the emotional rollercoaster that is change, I've learned to accept change and control what is within my ability. This new mentality will be valuable in many different avenues of life and continue to help build resilience for other life transitions.

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



The Study Dude

How to Master Skills for our Ideal Careers

Marie Well



A body in motion stays in motion. The more time we spend learning skills, the more our focus turns into passion--and the quicker we arrive at mastery. Like an exponential curve, the more we fixate on developing a skill, the faster we move along that curve until we turn upward into the heights. That's where both passion and mastery meet.

The first thing we need to do, if career skill mastery is our goal, is to find the careers that fit our personality types. To do this, we can take this [free personality test](#) to get our personality type. Say, for instance, we find we're an INFJ, which stands for "introverted, intuitive, feeling, and judging." We'd then look up career fits on Google by searching "INFJ careers," and write the careers down on a spreadsheet.

After that, look up each career on a job search platform, such as indeed.com, to see the skills needed, the salary each career pays, and the education required and enter all these variables in the spreadsheet. And then we narrow down our list to one or two career paths to follow. After that, we might choose to pursue the education needed, according to the Indeed.com listings of education requirements for that career. And that's how we embark on our skills-development journey.

When we devote great stretches of time to learning new skills, we stumble on increasingly helpful resources and better opportunities. And better opportunities, such as career advancements, breed more learning. Thus, the exponential curve leaps upward.

To gain skills, we can couple our skills-development sessions with everyday tasks. If we walk our hallways while watching educational clips on our smart phones, we might begin to associate skills-development with walking. Soon enough, we may no longer bear to walk distances without viewing courses. And vice versa. So, we end up getting fit while learning new skills.

Similarly, if we listen to audiobooks while driving to work, we may condition ourselves to listen to audiobooks whenever we enter a vehicle. If we listen to educational podcasts while cleaning, we may condition ourselves to do so whenever we lift a rag. A habit of learning builds on itself when we fit it into our routines, even when we fit it into mundane tasks, such as reaching for a book while in the washroom.

If you haven't yet followed our ideal career path, no sweat. Just start following it today. Become the person we would've hoped to become. No age is too old; no path too lofty. As motivational speaker Earl Nightingale says, we can be on top of our game within five years. If that's all it takes, why not start now?

Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Mensa Canada Scholarship Programme

Sponsored by: Mensa Canada

Deadline: January 31, 2021

Potential payout: up to \$3000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants, over 18 years of age, and currently enrolled in a full-time program at an accredited Canadian post-secondary institution.

What's required: An email with contact and school info, along with a 250-word essay describing your academic, vocational, or career goals.

Tips: Read the How to Apply section carefully, and be sure to submit your essay in a permitted format.

Where to get info: mensacanada.ca/index-e.html



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Ash wonders if a supplemental exam written beyond the contract end date will affect the next semester, which already has a full course load; responses say no, it's all good. Chelsea asks if a supplemental midterm exam can be written after the final exam; responders say yes.

Other posts include the resumption of phone service at AU, citing google pics, exam-booking woes, and courses ECON 321, HRMT 322, SOCI 365, and TAXX 301.

reddit

A student asks if, due to a medical issue, an extension can be requested after the deadline; responses say yes and offer advice.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Nothing worse than booking your @ProctorU exam, studying all month, then finally on the day you realize you booked it incorrectly. These four tips will help you make sure you get it right news.athabascau.ca/learners/four-tips-auexam-proctoru/."

@austudentsunion tweets: "In the spirit of inclusivity and support for our members, AUSU has launched a Discord Server for the #2SLGBTQIA+ community at @AthabascaU! It is intended as a safe space for the community to find support, make friends, and chat. Visit <https://bit.ly/2KqfQVG> for more! #AthaU."

A COVID Christmas

Dear Barb:

Bah Humbug! This is going to be the worst Christmas ever. This COVID virus has devastated so many of my family and friends. Although I don't know anyone who has actually got the virus, but the fighting has ruined so many relationships. The people who believe the doctors and health officials want to do what they believe is right; protecting their older family members from getting sick and possibly dying if it would have been preventable. And then there are the ones who believe the virus affects very few people and most survive, and they don't want to wear a mask thinking it doesn't help anyway. The arguing goes back and forth and then it begins to get personal—one side says the other side has their head in the sand and is letting the government control their lives, the other says if they cared about their older grandparents, they would wear a mask and do what the experts are saying.

I am not going to say which side I am on, because I don't want to alienate the few friends and family members I have left. This Christmas we can't get together with family anyway, but I don't want this to carry on beyond the virus where my family and friends are no longer speaking to each other. Do you have any advice that might help people to put a different spin on this whole virus thing, and possibly make Christmas a little less stressful? Thanks, Claudia.

Hi Claudia:

Excellent topic and so important at this time of year. No doubt we are getting tired of this virus but there is light at the end of tunnel with the first vaccine set to be released soon in the US.

Throughout history there have always been polarizing issues and the COVID virus is no different. The top social problems I think are First Nations rights, wealth inequality, the rise of racism and the far right, immigration issues, wearing of the Niqab, gay marriage and abortion, just to name a few. Both sides have their beliefs and that is their right, but what is not right is to push your beliefs on another person.

We all have a right to our own perspective. However, just because you believe it, doesn't give you the right to force your will on other people, as this is an attempt to control and filter another person's view through our lenses. This will only result in hate and anger between people. Governments are made up of our elected officials, and we have chosen to give them the responsibility for making decisions for us and sometimes we don't agree with their decisions, but we chose them. Much like living in a condominium complex, we vote a board of directors in and they make the decisions for our complex, therefore we are expected to follow the rules imposed by them, even if we don't agree with them. For example, from my own personal experience my sister and I have very different views on most issues, as we are different people, but once we start removing the layers of societal differences, we are, most importantly, family and always will be no matter what. We have lost a brother and a sister in the last few years, so we realize there is a deeper connection that will always remain in spite of the masks, the immigration laws, or whatever the current social issue is.

My suggestion is to share this column with family and friends, I'm not saying it will make a difference, but it's worth a try. So Claudia, try to make the best of this Covid Christmas.

Merry Christmas to all my readers.

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
Celebrating Rebirth

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

- **Dec 20:** [Deadline to request exams for Dec. end date](#)
- **Dec 21 – Jan 4 –** AUSU Holiday Closure
- **Dec 24 – Jan 4 –** [AU Holiday Closure](#)
- **Jan 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Feb 1](#)
- **Jan 14:** [AUSUnights Virtual Student Social](#)
- **Jan 15:** [Feb degree requirements deadline](#)

Happy Holidays from AUSU

We wish all of our members a happy holiday! We have put together a few resources to help you out over the holidays. Stay safe and be well!

Mental Health Support:

Athabasca University has a [mental health and wellness program](#) through Homewood Health to provide students with free counselling, as well as coaching and services on a variety of topics relating to mental health and wellness.

1-800-663-1142 (En) | 1-866-398-9505 (Fr)

LinkedIn Learning

AUSU offers free LinkedIn Learning access to all students. LinkedIn Learning has thousands of online micro-learning videos made by industry experts. It also has resources to help you get through the season, assist you in your courses, and prepare you for the future!

Find out more or sign up [here](#).

Holiday Closures

The AU Students' Union will be closed for the holidays from December 19 to January 3, inclusive. We will resume operations on January 4, 2021, and phone availability will resume on January 6, 2021.

Athabasca University will be [closed for the holidays](#) from December 23rd at 4:30pm MT to January 3, inclusive. They will re-open for regular business on January 4, 2021, and phone availability will resume on January 2, 2021.

AUSU 2SLGBTQIA Discord Server

In the spirit of inclusivity and support for our unique membership, AUSU has launched a new Discord Server for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at Athabasca University!

The [AUSU 2SLGBTQIA+ Discord Server](#) was developed to celebrate and support sexual and gender diversity at AU. It is intended to be a safe space for the community to find support, make friends, and chat about their experiences. All allies, supporters, and friends are encouraged to join as well.

Join our community and stay tuned for upcoming announcements, events, and resources!

Join the 2SLGBTQIA+ Discord Server

We have also compiled an extensive 2SLGBTQIA+ Resource Page, including:

- Mental Health Support
- National support and resources
- Provincial support and resources
- Athabasca University-specific courses & resources
- The Voice Magazine specific articles

Access the 2SLGBTQIA+ Resources [here](#).

Find out more on the AUSU website [here](#).



CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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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