



# THE VOICE

Vol 29 Issue 19 2021-05-14

## **Minds We Meet**

Interviewing Students Like You!

## **Stray Dogs**

The Voice Writing Contest Winner!

## **An Epiphany**

I'm Old



*Plus:*

*Why the Canadian Census Is Ridiculous  
Council Connection: April 21 2021 Meeting  
and much more!*

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**We love to hear from you!**  
**Send your questions and comments to [voicemagazine.org](http://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 Champions

Karl Low



If you haven't checked out any of our contest winners, now is definitely the time. This week we're presenting the fiction winner of The Voice Writing contest, it's entitled *Stray Dogs* and is a story that is absolutely worth the read. Seriously, I'd love to just go on about this one, but I don't want to spoil your chance at having the same type of first impression that I got. Stop wasting your time reading this if you haven't already read that, it's that good, in my opinion, and deserved the win. Go. Go now.

Okay, now that you've done that, we can get back to business. Obviously *Stray Dogs* is one of the things we're featuring this week, and congratulations again to Catherine Moise on winning the Fiction side of The Voice Magazine's Writing Contest, but not to be outdone, we're also featuring student and Voice Magazine writer Adrienne Braithwaite in this week's "Minds We Meet", what happens when a newly trained teacher starts her first practicum and then COVID-19 blows apart the standard classroom system? Read her story to find out.

Also this week, Jessica Young returns with an epiphany as to how she's now old. She's turning twenty-seven. I have to admit, I'm not sure how to react to that. Not without (carbon) dating myself, at any rate. But it struck me as a reminder that no matter how "old" we think we are, there's probably people out there who think we don't know what we're talking about, and that means instead of thinking we're old and despairing, we can celebrate how young we are when compared to those others. But is that a form of schadenfrude? Regardless, it's still a good read, so be sure to check it out.

Plus Jeff Shermack brings forward a rant about the Canadian Census. This is one of those articles that I disagree with, but my viewpoint isn't the only one. I worked the census one year, and while most people are good natured about the whole thing (even the long form) there are some who aren't, and often simply letting them know that there was a possibility of fines involved was enough to get you in the door. Once that was done and the people got to understand how little personal information was asked for, and what the census was used for, they'd often come around to supporting it. Part of the problem of the census is that a lot of people don't actually know what's being asked—they just have a knee-jerk reaction to being asked anything by the government, and even fewer know how that information is used and why it's important.

Of course, that's just my opinion. You should go read his for an alternative take.

We also have the council meeting report in which we learned about three councillors all leaving the group and prompting a new by-election to be happening in the next few months. I managed to talk with one of those leaving and get her comment on why, and what advice she'd give to people who decide to run in the by-election.

And, as always, news, reviews, events, scholarships and more! So, enjoy the read, I know that I did! Especially *Stray Dogs*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl", with a stylized, flowing script.

# 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 Adrienne Braithwaite from Leduc, Alberta, located on Treaty 6 territory and a traditional meeting ground and home for many Indigenous Peoples, including the Cree, Saulteaux, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Métis, and Nakota Sioux Peoples.

Adrienne is “originally from Prince George, BC,” and “moved to Edmonton after graduation to begin studying at the University of Alberta.” She continued, “My interests and career ambitions as a young adult changed several times throughout my first few years in Edmonton. While attending university, I got

married, had two children, and moved to Leduc, AB. I also worked full-time and, through my employer, I was able to gain my travel agent certification. I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 2011 and was also eight months pregnant at the time. For the next several years, I stayed at home until my children were both school aged. My spouse frequently travels outside the country for work, and one of the best employment options for me as a young mother was to become an education assistant. My role as an education assistant broadened my awareness of the need for empathetic and compassionate teachers. After several years working in schools, I made the decision to continue my post-secondary studies and pursue an after-degree in education to become a teacher. My personal interests are cultural studies, literacy, travel, and current events, and one of the best options for me career wise was to choose an occupation where I could share my passion for life-long learning with students.”

Although she has taken many courses through Athabasca University, in May, Adrienne will be graduating from The King’s University with an After-Degree in Secondary Education. (Longtime *The Voice Magazine* readers may recognize Adrienne as one of our regular writers; check out her latest, “Let Your Voice Be Heard in 2021!”)

Adrienne stated, “Once I complete my program, I will be qualified to teach junior and senior level social studies and English language arts. Having to choose between the secondary and elementary streams in education was a difficult decision for me. I had worked in elementary schools for several years when I applied to the education program, but the curricular topics I was most interested in leaned heavily towards secondary content. After some deliberation, I decided junior and senior high would be the best match for my personal interests. I am currently nearing the

competition of my second practicum placement, and each day I feel more prepared to face the challenging demands of teaching in a high school setting. During my practicum, I have loved teaching about the world, cultural diversity, and engaging students in critical thinking about social problems impacting peoples' everyday lives. I am excited to branch out as a teacher in my own right and to be able to create a classroom environment matching my own personal teaching philosophy." She continued, "Throughout my post-secondary education, I have taken many Athabasca University courses and they have always easily transferred into my programs at other institutions. AU's flexible learning environment has provided me with more free time to spend with my family at home as well as the opportunity to be employed casually while completing my studies. In the future I hope to continue my journey in post-secondary education to become qualified to instruct university level courses."

Over the years, many people have influenced Adrienne on her desire to learn. She stated, "When I was a teenager, my mother decided to pursue a social work degree after having been a stay-at-home parent for all of her adult life. I was the youngest of four children and at the time my mother was the first person in our family to seek out post-secondary studies. Flash forward to 2021, and all my siblings have since graduated from university. For my own desire to learn, I would credit both of my parents. They always had high standards for education and encouraged my siblings and I to seek out knowledge not just for the sake of obtaining a fulfilling career, but also to engage in critical thinking about the world. My mother specifically comes from a long line of independent and strong women who have always supported women's empowerment and individualism. In addition to supporting one another, my siblings and I now encourage our own children to pursue post-secondary education." Adrienne also credits her spouse's family, who "strongly [value] education and support continuing education at any age," as well as her "professors at The King's University" who have encouraged her and have highlighted the strengths she brings to teaching based on her past experiences.

Adrienne described her experience with online learning, which coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated, "My first practicum abruptly ended, and I was quickly thrown into supporting my own children at home with their online learning. This was a challenge my husband and I weren't prepared for as parents. We had to quickly purchase a new Chromebook and find areas in our home where our two children could work without interruptions during their Google Meets. I found it difficult to try to support my children with online learning while also trying to be attune to the emotional toll they were experiencing with all of their favourite activities being cancelled all at once." She continued, noting that, by November, all of her classes had moved online. "From a student perspective, the quality of instruction was definitely hindered by the blending of online and in-person classes. Classes were often interrupted when students were having connectivity problems trying to access the live class from home and the professor would have to pause the class to brainstorm the problems. My Winter term in January was entirely online and were six-hour days of Zoom. My classes had brief breaks, but the long days were draining, and I found it hard to concentrate by the end of each class. I was used to being at my computer to do homework, but to have to be in front of your computer for six-hours of class as well as to do homework was academically exhausting." Despite this, there were some positives, including saving money on gas and being home when her children arrived from school.

When asked to choose her most memorable AU course, Adrienne stated, "I recently completed CLST 201: Cultural Studies and Everyday Life, and it was definitely the most memorable course I have taken through Athabasca University. CLST 201 focuses on popular culture and how it impacts society and our everyday lives. My undergraduate degree specialized in cultural anthropology and I took this course as an elective for my After-Degree Program. The flexible format of this course allowed me to build upon what I already know about cultural and society

and to analyze societal issues through the lens of a pre-service teacher. I found this course highly relevant to the everyday influences in the lives of high school students today. I was able to focus my research to topics [that] are relevant to modern students by highlighting the role popular culture plays in individual and collective identity.”

As for communication with her tutors? “Personally, I find communications with my AU course tutors awkward and brief. There is not the same level of interaction with AU course tutors that you would normally have with an in-person post-secondary experience. For instance, I did really well in one of my AU courses and the course instructor said they gave me the highest mark they have ever given any student in the course. However, when I asked that same instructor if they would provide me with a reference to speak to my comprehension and ability with the course content, they declined. The instructor noted that because they did not know me personally (other than through the course), they could not speak about my understanding of the course content. I thought this was strange as I had spent six months with this course tutor and worked very hard to ensure I understood the course content. After this experience, I realized that some of the instructors at AU feel their role is to just answer students’ questions but to not actually engage as real people with their students. I believe this is a limitation and missed opportunity for the course tutors at AU to build relationships with the students and treat them with the same level of communication and engagement as they would if it was in a real classroom setting. However, this is just my experience with one course and one instructor and other students may certainly have different experiences with this.”

If she were the new president of AU, Adrienne would “seek out further advertising and raise awareness of the flexible programming available through Athabasca University.” She continued, “I know this is already being done, but I would increase the efforts to raise awareness of AU all across Canada. The demand for flexible learning is increasing and I believe Canadian students deserve access to affordable post-secondary options. I would create a team to market AU’s programs through targeted advertising, which highlights faculty, student experiences and options for career enhancement. After that, I would expand the AU course and program options. If other post-secondary institutions have found creative ways to offer online programming for specialized degree paths, so can AU.”

When asked which famous person, past or present, she would you like to have lunch with and why, Adrienne chose Paulo Freire. “He was a Brazilian philosopher and educator as well as an advocate of those who are marginalized in society. Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) and advocated for learning as a way to initiate social change. I would ask Freire what teachers in the 21st century should do to encourage empathy and equality in society. Freire spent much of his career trying to raise awareness of ‘critical consciousness,’ which is a belief that with education, people can truly understand the needs of others in society. This knowledge can then be used to impact social change. I personally believe my role as a teacher is to demonstrate kindness and foster cultural diversity in the classroom. By doing so, I hope to encourage the citizens of tomorrow to be more caring, compassionate and understanding of the needs of others.” And that lunch? “Something Brazilian of course! This is entirely selfish to expand my own experience and taste buds. I would love to hear from other readers as to what dishes are uniquely Brazilian as I have absolutely no experience with Brazilian foods. A Google search comes up with Brazilian Chicken Croquettes which look extremely appetizing.”

As for her most valuable lesson learned in life? “Knowing when to stop and listen to others instead of responding too quickly. As a person who loves to talk, I find this hard but vital to establishing good communication with others. My first reaction is always to say something immediately after someone is done talking, however, when I remember to pause and wait, I am far less likely to say

something I will later regret. Related to that, with important emails, I often type up what I initially want to say, then I delete everything, rewrite it, and then save it to reread before sending.”

Adrienne described having her first articles published in *The Voice Magazine* as one of her proudest moments. She continued, “I had many things going on last year with my first year of the Education Program, COVID-19 lockdowns and a shortened student teaching practicum. Being able to write for *The Voice* gave me a sense of pride in my writing and was a confidence boosting experience for me.

“Up until last year I had received fulfillment through my volunteerism as a Trustee on my local library board and writing my own personal blogs (baking & book reviews), but having an article published for the first time was a big achievement for me as an individual. The opportunity to write for *The Voice* challenged me to seek out engaging topics relevant to the lives of everyday students such as myself. As a mature student, I have tried to infiltrate my writing with my own experiences while also actively pushing myself to explore topics outside of my areas of expertise. So far, I have had the opportunity to write on cultural diversity, women in STEM, inequality and marginalization; these are all topics, which I believe are so important to enhancing Canadian society. Going through the motions of researching, writing, and having an editor offer guidance, has been such a useful and cup filling moment for me. In this interview, I have talked so much about my passion for cultural studies, but I am also an English language arts teacher. Writing unique articles and keeping up my personal blogs have given me a new perspective on the writing process. As a perfectionist, creative writing has always been something I am afraid of. I repeatedly ask myself, ‘Would anyone even be interested in reading my articles?’ As a casual writer and now educator, I am slowly overcoming my fear and self-doubt when it comes to creativity. Along with that has come a new sense of pride and accomplishment in the things I produce both for myself and others.”

As a final note, Adrienne described some of her travel experiences, which provided her “with a unique sense of empathy and understanding towards cultural diversity.” She continued, “During my high school years, I had the opportunity to spend a month in Romania with a team of other youth, visit Israel with my mother as well as do a student French exchange within Canada. I learned about other cultures during a very influential stage of my life, and it has made me more aware of peoples’ diversity in terms of religious beliefs, social behaviours, language, and cultural traditions. In Romania, I quickly learned that people in other parts of the world did not live the same way as we do in North America and many people do not have access to the same quality of living as I had experienced in my childhood. In Israel, I was in awe of the evidence of ancient history found in our world as well as how strongly some peoples’ religious beliefs are represented in their everyday life. During my French language exchange in Quebec, I learned about the diversity of student experiences just in Canada alone. I realized that even though we all collectively identify as Canadian, we have a variety of experiences and express our ‘Canadian culture’ differently. As a pre-service social studies teacher, these past experiences have provided me with a unique perspective when teaching about topics such as globalization. I am able to draw from my experiences and highlight the importance of being able to recognize one’s own ethnocentrism. I credit my past experiences for my earnest desire as an educator to demonstrate the value of a pluralistic society.”

If you would like to join Adrienne of her “coffee drinking, travel loving, and student teaching journey,” feel free to follow her on [Instagram](#)! Best of luck Adrienne!

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



## Stray Dogs

Catherine Moise



If you haven't yet read our honourable mention or our runner up for the fiction contest, you really should check them out as well, but this week, I'm very proud to be presenting our Fiction Voice Writing Contest Winner. "Stray Dogs" by Catherine Moise. After reading it, I have to agree with our judges, it absolutely deserves to be here.

Dr. Angie Abdou was one of the judges of our contest, an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Athabasca University who has published eight books including her most recent memoir, *This One Wild Life*, which debuted on the Canadian Best Sellers List. You can find out more about her, and all our judges, in our announcement article "And the Winner Is...", but she also provided us some commentary on the winning entry:

"'Stray Dogs' is a contemporary Western skillfully woven in tight, rich, and evocative prose. With a soft

touch and keen power of observation, the author explores human isolation and human connection. There is not a speck of sentimentality or cliché in this original mother-son story. "Stray Dogs" is a rare and mesmerizing treasure. Readers will find something new to admire each time they return."

And you know what? She's right. I've read through this thing several times already and keep picking out different pieces that capture my attention. So, please enjoy Catherine Moises' entry, the fiction winner of The Voice Writing Contest:

### Stray Dogs

The blade gnaws back and forth on the leather. Seven notches. I'm keeping count. I carved the first notch with baby fat still clinging to my legs. I wore my toy spurs and cowboy hat. The gunslinger in me wondered how I won the gun fight. Better gun? Quicker draw? We forgot the hat in a ditch in Horsefly, B.C. when we stopped so I could take a leak. I cried about them all the way through Alberta—stopped crying when Mitch the Moron gave me something to cry about. The spurs are planted in the prairies. Buried in wheat taller than me. Muscles pitched them when a late-night binge ended with the sharp edge of a spur planted in his foot.

Sheila keeps count of her exes by carving out their eyes. Not quite as gruesome as you'd think. She snaps a polaroid shot first thing. She waits for failure like some people wait for a train or a bus. Then Sheila white-knuckles the knife and carves a jagged rectangle around the polaroid eyes. She keeps the eyes in a tin can. Nights when the owls hoot outside the car window and there're no stray dogs in sight, Sheila takes them out. She arranges them chronologically—plays nostalgia.

I rub my thumb along the rough edge of the notched leather. It's a piece of leather from my holster—the only thing left of my gunslinger days. I keep it in the trunk of the old car, tucked in behind the broken taillight; sucking gasoline fumes.

The first few weeks with one of Sheila's stray dogs nauseates; like too much candy right before bed. Sunshine and sweet talk—hugs and hangovers.

"Don't ya just love him bud?" Sheila prods. "Hey bud, got a hug for Joe Blow?" Or whatever name sits in the driver's seat at that point.

The warm, hazy, lovey-dovey bullshit always ends; right around that time Sheila starts to sharpen the knife. She turns into a blowfish when things get ugly. Ingests huge quantities of liquor. I watch her face puff up and her body inflate. That's when the aquarium gets tight and I realize there's not much room left for me.

On the west coast of B.C., near Vancouver, Sheila took me to Wreck Beach. She said it was a clothing optional beach. I didn't get it. I grabbed my beach bucket and swim trunks.

"Hey bud," Sheila said, "You don't need your trunks – leave 'em here."

Naked bodies speckled the beach. I didn't want to take my clothes off but Sheila said it'd be rude not to join in. So there I stood with willy wafting in the breeze – beach balls bouncing. Sheila taught me to make sand angels.

"You're my little angel," she said, smiling and playing with my hair.

I still called her Mom back then. Mom and her little angel. Wreck Beach is where Sheila picked up Muscles. Later I stood in the mirror flexing my little boy biceps and practicing a deep, "Hey beautiful." Muscles didn't last long. I had him figured for a long shot anyhow.

Donuts showed up in Manitoba. Donuts liked to play whack a mole with Sheila's ass. We met him at a Dunkin' Donuts drive-through in Flin Flon, Manitoba. We made a stop at every donut shop along the road. One day he tried to play whack a mole with my ass. Sheila punched him. Just like that—right when I thought she had nothing left to give me. Sure do miss the donuts though.

Sheila's lips either pucker or pout—always ready for action. Unless she's eating. Then they smack open and shut like she's chewing gum rather than food. When I was a boy, in that gray area before the dawn of manhood, Sheila told me, "Remember bud, girls like respect. Send 'em flowers. Treat 'em special." Back then I hung on her every word—a spider baby hanging from her web.

Took us a long time to scout through Ontario. By the time we reached T.O. I had a fine-tuned swagger. Took it for a walk down Yonge Street. Sheila with her sashay and me with my swag—both on the hunt.

When Muscles sent those spurs flying through the air back in the prairies I learned something.

The way they flew? Propelled by anger? I got to thinking how anger could stir the pot. Anger bubbled and boiled and people got burnt. I started messing around. A snatched wallet from a guy Sheila picked up in T.O. Whiskey poured down the drain. A hole cut in a favourite pair of jeans. Then I just sat back and watched the action. No flowers for Sheila.

We had jerked our way through Quebec, and Sheila had picked up T just past the Ontario border. Monsieur Francais. Theophile Talbot from Temiscaming. We call him T. I like the way he talks. His words reach his eyes in a way that makes me think he really sees me. I try to behave; shackle the saboteur. T teaches me to fish. I learn to skewer fat, juicy worms onto hooks. I start to think things might stick this time. Fish fries and campfires dull the ache in my gut. I start seeing

sunsets, beg for cigarettes and let them dangle at the corner of my mouth the way T does. Then T slaps Sheila.

In the morning I splash a little antifreeze in his coffee. We drop his dizzy, slurred, nauseated ass at the emergency room doors. Sheila always perches, ready for flight, in case her feathers get ruffled. So, we hit the road. I put another notch in the old holster leather and I sit in the back seat staring at the trees flying by, the cars whizzing past. Nothing worth counting except those damn notches.

Our old tin-can car wheezes and heaves along the highway. We slip out of Quebec, slide through New Brunswick and settle into Nova Scotia. By then Sheila's voice has reached a new low. I recognize the husky hiss— her own unique mating call. She parks in the middle of two parking spots right outside The Topsy Turtle Bar and Restaurant. A band in the corner cranks out Elvis whining about tender love. Sheila yanks me onto the dance floor.

"C'mon bud, dance with your Mama."

My arms and legs jump and jerk like a spider curling into a death dance. Sheila slips drinks my way.

"Loosen up bud. C'mon."

My legs slither across the floor and my arms snake through the air. I am a snake. My body curls and jerks.

The night is filled with hoots and spilled beer—slow dances and sloppy kisses. Sheila's long arms wrap each man in a syrupy embrace. I eye each one and make a silent bet. Which one wants to play Daddy?

At midnight, Sheila stumbles into a chair. She lights a cigarette, and the smell of singed hair reaches my nostrils. Her lips spread, teasing her face into a smile. I rub my hand across the top of my mouth – feel the fuzz festering on my upper lip. I wonder what she has poured into me. What mix of beer-soaked logic? What concoction of winding roads and unknown terrain will plot my future maps. And what of the men's eyes trapped forever in a tin can?

I stand and lean over Sheila. I whisper in her ear.

"C'mon Mom. Let's get out of here."

Her eyes widen in surprise as she acknowledges my slip of tongue. I lift her body and she reaches up to wrap her arms around my neck. Faded. Sour. This is how she smells. This is how she has always smelled.

"I'm tired bud," she says.

I turn and begin to direct her body to the door. She wobbles and weaves. I tuck her into the back of the old car. Her eyes slip shut.

"Bud?" she says, "I think I'm tired of all those stray dogs."

I pull an old blanket up to her chin. My hand smashes a mosquito against the car window. I open the trunk and pull the old bit of leather from behind the taillight. I slide into the front seat and stare up over the steering wheel into the night sky. I count the notches. Fifteen. And I think to myself, Sheila, we are the stray dogs.



## An Epiphany—I'm Old

Jessica Young



I suppose I should have realized this sooner. I am twenty-six years old, turning twenty-seven this year. A millennial—officially in my late twenties. I also have two elementary school aged children. Maybe that should have been my first clue.

I have recently discovered that Gen Z—the generation born between 1997 and 2015—has been brutally making fun of millennials on social media, specifically via Tik Tok. The fact that I still don't particularly understand Tik Tok despite it being the one of the most popular social media platforms today should have been another hint at my old age, but I digress. Millennials are getting picked on for everything from our fashion sense to our vocabulary. High-waisted skinny jeans and side-parted hair are no longer cool and have been replaced with middle-parts and mom jeans. Apparently, our personality revolves around *The Office*, *Harry Potter*, and not being able to function without coffee or wine, while favourite words like “doggo” and “adulging” are making Gen Z cringe.

It was difficult to realize that I'm no longer considered young and certainly not cool anymore, but the sinking feeling in my stomach wasn't because I was concerned with what teenagers on the internet think about me, it was because my mortality was staring me in the face. Twenty-six years has gone by *fast*. How quickly will the next twenty-six go? When I was a teenager, it felt like that time in my life was going to last forever—like I was always going to be that same person, with the same hopes and dreams, and those same opinions on how life works. I couldn't imagine myself becoming one of the out-of-touch adults I found so embarrassing, but here I am. Out-of-touch and most likely embarrassing. To quote *The Simpsons*, “I used to be with it, but then they changed what ‘it’ was. Now what I'm with isn't ‘it’, and what's ‘it’ seems weird and scary to me”.

I'm also realizing that “weird and scary” doesn't only apply to fashion or social media. It also means new societal norms, movements for radical change, and evolving ideas about the next generation thinks our world should look like. It means accepting that the things I learned as a child and the ideas I had about life might be wrong. It means my kids are growing up in a world I seem to know very little about.

Despite all of this, in a strange way, the realization that I'm “old” has given me comfort. Every generation before me has dealt with being afraid and uneasy about the new generation's ideas, and yet, everything worked out just fine. The abolishment of slavery, women's suffrage, and LGBTQ+ rights were once radical, “weird and scary” ideas too. I think it's only natural to feel nervous about change, especially while simultaneously comprehending the brevity of life. Recognizing and accepting that it's no longer my turn to revolutionize the world has made me feel safer, particularly during these uncertain times. I am happier than I have ever been, focusing on what brings me meaning instead of what is trendy. I'm ready to embrace the change.

But I'm still going to wear my skinny jeans.

*Jessica is completing her Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations degree while pursuing her passion for writing and drinking coffee.*



## Council Connection

### April 21, 2021 Meeting

**Karl Low**



The meeting was called to order at 6:28pm with eight of the, at that time, ten remaining councillors present.

Absent were councillors Monique Durette and councillor Kathryn Hadden.

President Stacey Hutchings lead the group with land acknowledgements, while others noted their own location in the Zoom chat. I'll be honest, I have no clue what treaty location I'm on, here in Calgary, but it's interesting to see how many on AUSU Council do.

#### **Executive Election**

Agenda, minutes, and action items were quickly dispensed with and so we moved into the first item of the meeting, the announcement of the new executive team. For those wondering, the Athabasca University Students' Union elects

(ideally) 13 councillors for a two-year-term. The councillors elected then choose three, now four, of those elected to serve as the executive team, a group that has additional responsibilities and demands, and of course some additional perks and pay to compensate for it. That executive team, however, only sits for one of the two years that the councillors are elected for, after which an internal election is held to choose a new executive team (which can be exactly the same as the old one if the councillors are okay with that).

This gives the council at large the chance to change gears if they feel it's necessary, and gives those councillors who gained the executive positions the chance to step aside gracefully if they find out that the demands of the job were more than they bargained for.

This year, the newly elected executive team is the same as the old one, with the one change being that former Vice-President External and Students Affairs Natalia Iwanek moved to the new office of Vice-President Community and Wellness (VPCW) while Councillor Karen Fletcher became the new Vice President External(VPEX). This division is supposed to allow these two councillors to focus more specifically on an area, with the VPCW focusing more on internal actions for AU students and communities within the AU student body, while the VPEX concentrates on AUSU's relations with other organizations and student groups, such as the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).

As a result, the new executive team is Stacey Hutchings, President, Almigdad Eldoma as Vice President Finance and Administration, and Natalia Iwanek and Karen Fletcher as the aforementioned VPCW and VPEX respectively.

#### **Councillor Removal**

Item eight was an in camera motion, so I was moved to an external Zoom room, and soon joined by Kathryn Hadden. Kathryn and I chatted about her time on AUSU and how she loved working with the awards committee. She let me know that the reason for the In Camera session was likely because she had not been able to properly show her continuing student status at AU. One of AUSU's policies requires that all councillors provide a transcript to AUSU showing they're not on

academic probation and proof of registration in a course within three months of the second term year.

Sure enough, when we were returned to the main meeting, the motion “BIRT AUSU council approves the removal of Kathryn Hadden from AUSU council for failing to meet the academic requirements for councillors as set out in Policy 2.14” was put forward. A secret ballot was called, and the motion passed with seven councillors in favour, one opposed.

President Hutchings took a moment to thank Kathryn for her dedication and time, noting “You’ve done so much for the organization, and you’ve been on so many busy committees,” before moving on to the next item, as Kathryn quietly logged off.

Eight councillors remained present.

### **AUGSA Sponsorship**

The next motion was about AUSU Council spending an unbudgeted \$1,500 to sponsor the Athabasca University Graduate Student Association (AUGSA) Graduate Student Research Conference. It was noted that this is the keystone event of the AUGSA and the tenth year they’ve been running it, with last year the first that undergraduates had been invited to take part.

At that event it was noted that while the graduates received some awards and prizes, including cash prizes depending on their research, none of that was available for undergraduates. The executive directors of both AUGSA and AUSU came together and developed the idea of AUSU stepping in and supporting the event as a sponsorship which would specifically go to undergrad student entrants, and would in turn allow an AUSU representative a seat on their advertising committee to ensure that undergrad students were also made aware of the opportunity.

Councillor Katy Lowe was acknowledged as the councillor who really spear-headed this idea of getting undergrads into the research conference, and it was also agreed that this was a great way to start to provide opportunities for undergraduates to get into the research side of academia, something that is generally more common and brick and mortar universities, but has been difficult to handle at AU.

It was noted that the funds involved would easily come from surplus funds that AUSU had received beyond their budget estimates.

### **Committee Appointments**

As with the change-over in the executive team, each year AUSU also appoints all new members to its various standing committees, again giving councillors a chance to change gears and adjust based on new interests or outside commitments. The next several minutes of the meeting were devoted to finding councillors to sit on all of the standing committees, with it being noted that there would soon be a by-election and new councillors brought in, which might lead to opportunities for committee membership to change again if council felt it was appropriate.

The most interesting part of the nominations was that councillor Regan Johnson was appointed to all four committees, despite not being present at the meeting. While you might just assume it was a bit of a prank, a type of “That’s what you get if you don’t show up,” thing, Regan was in contact with various councillors and staff during the meeting despite not being present, and apparently expressed her interest, or at least willingness, to be on the committees.

### **Policy Adjustments**

VPFA Almigdada Eldoma lead council through the various policy adjustments this evening, as the were all finance policies. Most of the changes were simply slight wording adjustments for

clarity, although council did increase their per-diem amount for travel by \$10/day, while also eliminating the possibility to essentially “double-dip” on expenses while travelling. Another change was the increase of the limits of unbudgeted spending that Council would allow without full approval from Council being necessary – with the limit increasing from \$1,000 to \$2,500 that can be approved by just the executive committee, and with only finance committee being required to approve unbudgeted spending up to \$7,500 (up from the \$2,500 previously allowed). Full council approval remains for any unbudgeted spending above \$7,500.

### Reports

The one notable addition to the executive and committee reports was to President Stacey Hutchings’ report where she noted she had received two resignation letters, the first from councillor Monique Durette, and the second from councillor Darcie Fleming, both to be effective as of May 1, 2021. President Hutchings noted she wanted to thank them, and noted their services and how they’ve dedicated “a lot of time to help AUSU be where it is today.”

No comment was added to any of the other reports until that of the Executive Director, Jodi Campbell, who wanted to take the opportunity to welcome AUSU’s now communications and member services co-ordinator, Ashley James. He also noted that, as of the end of March, AUSU’s physical offices were officially closed, and the organization is now working almost entirely virtually. This will no doubt lead to some significant savings for the organization.

### Recognition and Acknowledgements

Shout outs went to Katy for being the awards committee chair for so long, especially during the pandemic and higher than normal demand, to Stacey for her work done with CASA recently, to the entire exec team for choosing to meet with councillors individually and find out their goals, and also to Darcie Fleming, “when we started after the byelection it felt like being thrown in the deep end,” according to VPEx Karen Fletcher, “it was so helpful for you to always be there, explaining what parts of policy mean what. Your knowledge and the background work you do made it a lot easier for me, and we will miss you. You bring something unique to the team and it’s been fantastic getting to know you, I’m so glad you were here when I started.”

Stacey also wanted to expand on her thank you to Kathryn from earlier, noting “I want it recognized that she was an active member of awards committee and want to recognize her contributions to AUSU, and even though the motion that happened earlier was based on the course credit requirement, she was very committed and I know that she’s going to be missed.

With that, and some final words from Jodi congratulating the group on a successful first year and congratulating the new exec team, the meeting was adjourned.

## AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

### **Bannock and a Movie May Edition: Gifts from the Elders, and The Sacred Relationship: Healing the Water, Healing Ourselves**

May 1 to May 31

Online

Hosted by AU Nukskahtowin

[news.athabascau.ca/events/may-online-bannock-and-a-movie/](https://news.athabascau.ca/events/may-online-bannock-and-a-movie/)

Access through above link

### **MBA for Accountants Info Session**

Thur, May 20, 10:00 to 11:00 am MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[news.athabascau.ca/events/mba-for-accountants-webinar-20210520/](https://news.athabascau.ca/events/mba-for-accountants-webinar-20210520/)

RSVP through above link

### **The Grad Lounge - Trivia Night**

Fri, May 21, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT

Online via Microsoft Teams

Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

[fgs.athabascau.ca/news/events/index.php](https://fgs.athabascau.ca/news/events/index.php)

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

*All events are free unless otherwise noted.*

## Afterward

I had the chance to communicate with Darcie after the meeting, asking her why she left, and what advice she might have for people seeking to join council during the by-elections and she wrote,

“I have enjoyed my terms as a councillor especially 2018-2019 and until November 2020. There are always differing opinions within a group of people and I wish all the best for current councillors.

“I have been accepted into the MAIS graduate program - cultural studies starting in September with a focus on the study of spiritual experiences in the context of phenomenology and social structures between Judeo-Christian and First Nations spirituality. My husband recently passed so this will keep me focused and busy with a purpose. I am doing ok and my resignation with AUSU will decrease some stress although I will miss many aspects.

“My advice to new councillors is to speak up, ask questions, stick to the policy as written and don't be afraid to be a dissenting voice, it is not a popularity contest. All councillors are leaders and have an equal voice at the table.”

## Next Meeting

Meeting times have changed, and the next meeting will be this coming Thursday, May 20, at 6:30pm. Contact [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) if you're interested in being there or finding out more about council and council activities.

*Karl's been involved with AUSU in one form or another since the turn of the century, and graduated from AU in 2012 with his Bachelor's of English (with great distinction he likes to add.) He now works as the Managing Editor for The Voice Magazine, so can add what he wants.*

# Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** 2021 Essay Contest

**Sponsored by:** Fraser Institute

**Deadline:** June 1, 2021

**Potential payout:** up to \$1500

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be students (high school, undergrad, grad) studying in Canada, or Canadian students studying abroad.

**What's required:** An online application form, with contact and academic info, along with a 1000-1500 word essay "exploring the importance of Joseph Schumpeter's concept of creative destruction in understanding entrepreneurialism and economic progress in today's world."

**Tips:** Read the [contest rules](#) carefully for instructions on essay format.

**Where to get info:** [www.fraserinstitute.org/education-programs/students/essay-contest](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/education-programs/students/essay-contest)



## Fly on the Wall

### It's All You at AU: Core Beliefs And Natural Inspiration

Jason Sullivan



Delusions of grandeur go with higher education like helium balloons go with funny voices and imagined flight. To rise above the vulgar norms of existence is what AU is all about; we become more than the sum of our parts when inspiration enters our view. Distance education implies a desire on the part of students to better avail themselves of tools and methods that will provide them with a greater understanding of the world. But anyone can howl in the wilderness. Whether it's a chortle or a tweedle, a voice full of helium or a lost clown in an alley in a Bob Dylan song, when our academic minds learn to sing it's a special thing. Others might be perplexed by us but that's okay; education is about our future selves, not them or our past iterations of identity.

Everything we learn has a why and a how; like all of life, reality depends on how we view it. The *hows* of life are like the incomprehensible howls of wild beasts or the nonsensical gibbering of karaoke singers who struggle to read onscreen lyrics. Yet it's the *whys* that really matter, for critical thinking; we get wise when we focus on the whys. There's more than a binary of how and why at play here, though. Growing as a thinker and learner requires us to resist being shackled by our core epistemic assumptions: how we know what we know isn't so cut and dried, you know?

For cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), if we must go there (and surely we all are well-advised to understand CBT's basic method because the CBT method is as hegemonic as Tim Hortons and as commonplace as Walmart), our core beliefs aid and abet, adjust and about our means of understanding the world. Take Leon Trotsky, for instance. Not the literal Trotsky, but the character in the 2009 play named Leon Bronstein who, realizing he shared the name Leon Bronstein with the famous communist leader, decided to adopt said leader's *nom de guerre* and become Leon Trotsky. Yet it wasn't like reaching into the tickle trunk and donning a new outfit of selfhood; for the protagonist, his delusion was that he was literally Trotsky. He believed such a reincarnation were possible and it all became true. For him. And, real to form, any Trotsky needed a murderer nemesis, a Moriarty to his Holmes. Meeting a likely candidate, the fictional Trotsky exclaimed "are you my Stalin, Dwight?"

Expectations of what the world will give us go along with how we react to our environments. W.I. Thomas, with succinct aplomb, summarized this sociological fact: "If men (sic) define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas, online). In our PC times it bears noting that we cannot not see something wrong with a word like men being applied to mean any old human! And so the consequences of our beliefs frame our understanding of the meaning of this classic sociological aphorism.

### Stepping Back: Back Into Nature

Henry David Thoreau, the great naturalist writer, is a constant companion when, in a normal year, my suitcase takes me places for work and play. His *Walden* reminds me that, even in a humble potted plant or along the outer wall of some nondescript building, nature is right there waiting to be noticed. It grows and abides everywhere people do and does so without ideology.

Nothing lifts me out of the doldrums of negativity about human nature, COVID-19, or academic anxiety like engaging in a little observational prowess in terms of the natural world that abounds all around. But first, preconceptions must be abandoned. The natural world, unlike our thoughts, need not be tended as we gaze upon it. We can just appreciate it as is. In noticing Spring details Thoreau realized how much he was missing by thinking, by being *aware* but not quite being *there*:

“The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever! The faint silvery warblings heard over the partially bare and moist fields from the bluebird, the song-sparrow, and the red-wing, as if the last flakes of winter tinkled as they fell! What at such a time are histories, chronologies, traditions, and all written revelations?” (Thoreau, 271)

In a state of nature, and whenever we think with our symbolic minds and surpass our Tetris-playing tendency to revert to a desire to play endless, mindless, monkey games, we find a natural world exempt from the social construction of reality. Gravity sucks, after all, if you jump from too high a spot. And water is no inspiration to our lungs if we lack gills. Likewise, a good walk in the woods or a park can do wonders for resetting the intellectual rhythms of our mind. To daydream, perchance to acquire epiphanic liberty, means that we become *right there* with the teeming, flourishing, thriving reality of unpaved planet earth. No binary of hows and whys or expected outcomes need apply, at least for a time.

Nature can provide an answer to the belief that education is just so many sheets of paper and so much useless book learning: when we return from our experiences of non-human nature our learning can take on a new hue and the inverse is true too. Our life and our world, indeed the planet herself, is reborn as our studies apply to our interactions. To gain perspective we have learn to hear what we once lacked words for. And, unlike a young Trotsky imagining his Stalin in every encounter with an interlocutor, we may best be open to enlightenment by not expecting too much certainty from our studies or our lives. After all, if we already knew everything why would we take courses? Instead of projecting our beliefs and assumptions onto the world, and onto our course material, it behooves us to be as open as a spring songbird to the potentials our brains invite in by attending AU. (The mother Robin in her nest at my doorway, with eggs safely clutched under her body, approves this message! One might recall the childhood book *Are You My Mother?* In it, a baby bird asks all and sundry if they are its mother, only to find out that only one being can be its mother. The test of reality is thus reality in its purest form: nature!)

Often, to see the world anew and to question our core beliefs along the way, all we have to do is open our eyes and let a little new light in. For to understand why the world and ourselves are the way they are requires us to accomplish a tricky fact of phenomenology: to learn to be there without dragging along our historic or scholastic baggage in the form of assumptions about the nature of our world. And so, as spring continues to bound outward in leaves and tendrils and blossoms, remember that the you in AU grows the most when it casts off the dross of prior expectations. The vastness of our minds has room for countless new ideas, after all, and like the earth itself the conditions for growth are all that's needed for germination to occur.

#### References

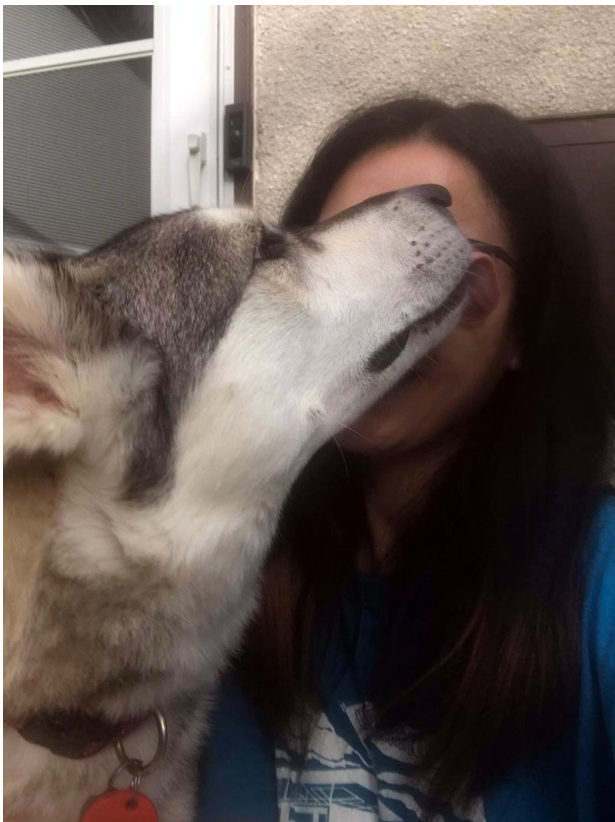
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*Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.*



## How to Be a Pet Foster Parent

Xine Xu



*Rescue husky I initially fostered from a previous foster parent. The previous foster parent trained her so well that I didn't have to train her when I first welcomed her into my home.*

With a new wave of lockdowns in place for many provinces, many households may be looking for some activities or time to dedicate to a pet. I know a year ago, I was in the same place. I suddenly felt a surge of free time and energy to take care of a rescue animal. Of course, being a pet foster parent is entirely different. Unlike adoption, fostering means you're only inviting a pet (typically dog or cat) temporarily to your home. You let them live with you until they find a forever home. Shelters may be overcrowded, and so a foster home allows them greater one-on-one attention and care. So why foster rather than adopt? Several common reasons from my peers who have committed to either:

1. Getting adjusted: for myself, taking on the full responsibility of pet adoption was huge. I had to be mentally and physically prepared to adjust my schedule and it can be overwhelming for some new pet owners. Fostering a pet can help families and individuals adjust to having a pet. To see if it's a good fit for their lifestyle, their comfort level and their time or energy levels.
2. Temporary location of residence: for many AU students who may be renting a dorm or suite, you may be unsure of how long you plan to stay at your current residence. Therefore, fostering a pet gives flexibility in case a big move needs to happen.
3. Costs: the full responsibility of adoption might include future veterinary care costs that can add up. If you're not in a financial situation to adopt, fostering can help alleviate some or all of the costs. Check with the shelter to see what options are available. Many times, the pets are already immunized and the shelter may cover for any veterinary expenses.

So now that you know the difference between pet adoption and pet fostering, what are the steps to getting started?

### Step 1:

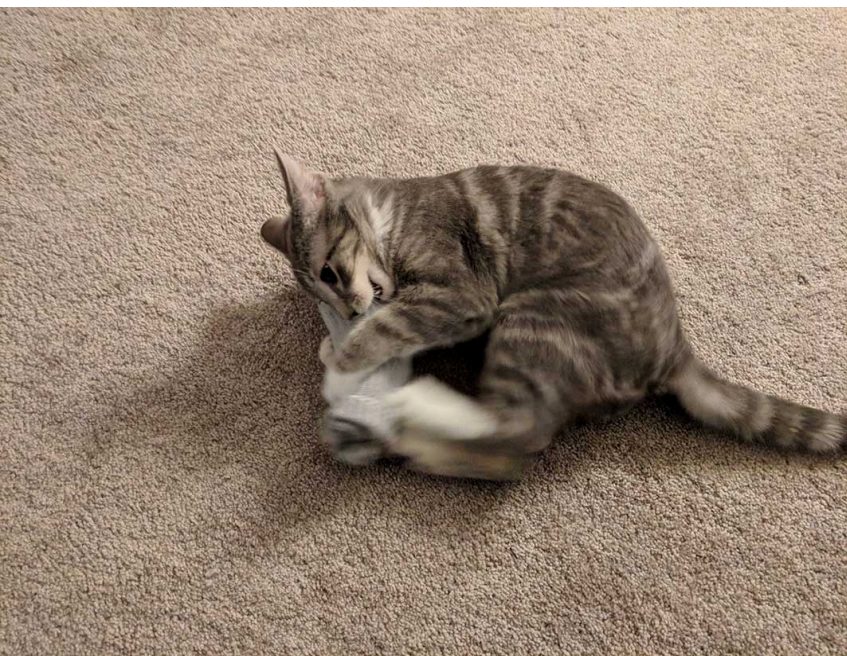
Google foster parent and find your nearest pet shelter.

### Step 2:

Fill out an online or in-person application form. If you have questions, call the organization to speak with a staff member. Many are experienced with the process and can provide some guidance throughout the process.



My friend's foster rabbit named Snowflake.



A colleague of mine recently adopted this beautiful kitten who has a love for freshly laundered socks.

### Step 3:

The rescue society or shelter will conduct an assessment to see if your home and personal situation allows for animals to be adequately cared for. There may be a minimum length of time commitment for foster pets. For the Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society, this is a three month commitment. Some societies do not allow for adoption post-fostering while others do. Make sure you familiarize yourself with the specific policies of each shelter.

### Step 4:

The shelter typically has a registry of animals that need a foster home. You may be able to select from a list or be notified when an animal is available for adoption.

### Step 5:

Show your foster pet some love!

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



## Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



#### AthaU Facebook Group

Advice salad. A student wondering how to have a life while studying receives a bowl-full of tips, including the importance of scheduling, goal-setting, and turning off the phone.

#### Discord

Channel down, channel revived. The original Discord channel for and by AU students was taken down by its creator. Dave Boyle stepped into the breach and set up the spanking-new Athabasca University Student Server. Join via invite link: [discord.gg/x4xASwwQev](https://discord.gg/x4xASwwQev).

#### reddit

What was the question again? A thread about requesting alternate assignments for exams devolves into a discussion on exam invigilation fees.

#### Twitter

[@austudentsunion](https://twitter.com/austudentsunion) tweets: "Just starting off your [@AthabascaU](https://twitter.com/AthabascaU) undergrad journey? Here's answers to a few commonly asked questions about what your Students' Union does for you! [t.co/KgG6Op5nB7](https://t.co/KgG6Op5nB7)."

## A Rant: Why the Canadian Census is Ridiculous

Jeff Shermack



A cheery greeting is a gift that all euphoric morning people love to give, and a burden that all recently resurrected, shambling night people hate to receive. As one of those somnambulists, I was not overly elated to hear, “just in time for me to fill out the census!” as I exited my bedroom one recent morning.

I can think of several sentences I would enjoy hearing less, but the necessary preceding context for them is so outrageous that I doubt whether my ears will ever be punished by their utterance.

“What prompted you to fill out the census?”

“We got a card in the mail,” responded this being, more saturated with morning energy than a desert cactus, “And you have to fill it out.”

“Oh yeah,” I replied, “or what?”

The cactus could not respond. Truthfully, I also didn’t know the answer. I flicked the statement out more as a sardonic end to the conversation than as a challenge, but the question hung in the air after I released it. Soon, my curiosity got the best of me.

What does happen if you choose not to fill out the census? My inquest brought me to a trove of information, all available on the [federal government’s website](#). The facts available there led me to an inevitable conclusion — like a blind man being led across the street by a reckless clown. The Canadian Census is ridiculous.

### What Happens if You Don’t Complete the Census?

If your first guess is nothing, then you’re not alone. I find it difficult to imagine anyone being chased down — or more ominously, mailed a summons to appear in court — because they failed to complete their census. In fact, the census is not something that I ever think about, until a windbreaker-wearing worker appears at my door and a wave of relief washes over me — generated by the realization that I won’t be politely listening to a sales-pitch before I’m forced to repeatedly decline their offer. Nothing is more anxiety inducing than the sound of my own doorbell.

You may be surprised to learn that all Canadian residents are legally required to complete the census questionnaire, in accordance with the [Statistics Act](#). I’ve never heard a more numbing title for a legal document.

Such a sterile name might suggest a venerable patina covers the Statistics Act, much like the green roofs of Parliament, but that would be an incorrect assumption. The bill has only been in effect since 1971, although many of its laws are so ridiculous that they seem draconian.

The penalty for refusing to participate in the census is a fine of up to \$500 — and absurdly, a court order to complete the census questionnaire. I can only imagine that sentence resulting in a cyclical pattern of \$500 fines and repeated court appearances — or else a representative of the court watching over an indignant census participant like a vigilant proctor watching a devious child.

### What are these Strange Stipulations about Census Years?

Did you know there is a census every five years? I didn’t. If you had asked me how often the census is completed, I probably would have answered every year, or every decade, but the Statistics Act

mandates a five-year census “for more up-to-date, detailed information about the country and its population” (Statistics Canada, 2021).

That five-year period isn’t so absurd. What I find amusing about this particular law is the specific stipulation for which years to conduct the census. Every year ending in zero and five would make the most sense for a five-year framework, but like many things related to governance, these laws do not follow logical reasoning.

The Statistics Act stipulates that the census should be conducted on every year ending with one and six. Maybe Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau had a vacation planned in 1970.

### **Why is There a Census of Agriculture?**

Did you know that there are two different forms of the census? Residents of Canada are required to participate in the Census of Population, but there is also a Census of Agriculture.

Why is there a Census of Agriculture? I don’t know. Some quick online research about Canada’s GDP breakdown by industry shows that agriculture is nowhere near being the top industry in Canada. Maybe farming topped the charts in 1971, but that doesn’t explain why the Census of Agriculture is still conducted.

Statistics Canada doesn’t seem to know either. Their own answer for why they conduct the Census of Agriculture simply states that they collect data on a wide range of entities in the agriculture industry so that they can create a “comprehensive picture of the agriculture industry across Canada every five years at the national, provincial, and sub-provincial levels” (Statistics Canada, 2021). That explanation satisfies me as much as my mechanic saying I should get an oil change because I need to change my oil.

I’m sure there’s also a fine for those who don’t comply, so dealing with the Census of Agriculture might be something to consider before you commit to starting up that hobby farm.

### **Why Does this Matter?**

Some silly sections of the Statistics Act don’t matter. Whether the census is completed on years zero and five or one and six is a pedantic concern — and it probably has more to do with the date that the Act was passed into law than anything else.

Other odd sections do deserve some consideration though. By Statistics Canada’s own admission, the census is an expensive operation. Saving “millions of taxpayer dollars” (Statistics Canada, 2021) is their reason for conducting the Census of Agriculture in May, when it coincides with the Census of Population — even though many farmers are busy at that time.

Is the Census of Agriculture really so important that it needs to be conducted? It seems to be a nuisance for farmers; agriculture is not an industry that needs so much focus; and Statistics Canada doesn’t even seem sure why they do it. Wouldn’t that money be better spent elsewhere? Couldn’t they save even more millions of taxpayer dollars by simply not doing it?

Even laws that have only been in place for fifty years should be considered in the context of current events. If we don’t take the time to consider why things are done and if they’re still necessary, we won’t be able to effectively address today’s issues. Puerile or pointless laws of the past can prevent progress in the present.

### *References*

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*Jeff Shermack was studying English, writing SF and interested in experiments with storytelling structure. This February he’ll be graduating from AU, getting ready to take on the real world.*

### Course Exam

Karen Lam

#### BIOL 310 (Biology of Human Sexuality)

*If you have a course that you would like to see a Course Exam article written for or you recently took a course that you would like to recommend to other AU students, please feel free to reach out with the course name and number, and any questions or feedback you may have. We'll be happy to write about it in our next Course Exam article.*

BIOL 310 is three credit undergraduate course that explores the definition of human sexuality, and notes that “defining human sexuality is not an easy task.” The term is often misunderstood, however, there is much more to human sexuality due to the complexity and range of behavior. BIOL 310 “offers students multiple perspective in order to understand sexuality.”

#### Who Should Take This Course and Why

This course is a biology course designed for those seeking a science elective, majoring in biology, or minoring in biology. However, it is also open to anyone who are interested in learning about human sexuality. The course will explore human sexuality and how it connects to the human body, gender identity, gender roles, attraction, behavior, orientation, pregnancy, and how it acts in later life. The course also covers the topics of sexual problems, dysfunctions, sexually transmitted infections, and disability.

#### Course, Assignment, Midterm and Final Exam Details

The course will cover knowledges of biology related topics in relation to human sexuality and help students understand and gain awareness for a healthy lifestyle. The course covers the human anatomical and physiological perspective, including the normal developmental perspective of the reproductive system from prenatal stage to adulthood. It will also cover the process of reproduction from conception to birth. The course also teaches students on the various aspects of sexual orientation and the biology of sexual attraction and behaviors in relation to human development, interaction, and reproductive health. These are just some of the topics, there are more topics in the course, and I recommend students check out the AU BIOL 310 [website](#) if they are interested in learning more.

The course is composed of two assignments each worth 15%. There is also an online midterm worth 20% and an online final exam worth 50% of the overall mark.

#### How to Be Successful in the Course

##### Tips from Course Coordinator – Dr. John Ulici, PhD

Dr. John Ulici is the Course Coordinator and his teaching philosophy has evolved from a combination of previous teaching experience and a well-formed knowledge base in a relatively large area of biology topics.

Dr. Ulici is continuously involved in initiatives that improve the quality of teaching; he sees himself as a facilitator with the overall goal of developing in students the capacity for independent action, initiative, and responsibility — through this constructivist approach, the students can reinforce the recently learned concepts. Through exercises, practical assignments, and written examinations, Dr. Ulici encourages students to better understand the topics at hand

and develop creative and investigative skills. Dr. Ulici noted that he “obtained my Ph.D. degree in Veterinary Sciences in 1996, but my academic experience started earlier in 1991, in Europe, with post-secondary teaching and supervisory experiences until 2002”

Later, in Canada after 2004, he continued teaching at the post-secondary level in the fields of animal care, biology, anatomy, and physiology, with the most recent appointment as Academic Coordinator at Athabasca University in Jan. 2006. During the period Dr. Ulici has been with Athabasca University, he has completed major revisions for BIOL 230 and 235 including the addition of lab component for BIOL 230; years later he has developed the new course, BIOL 320 Comparative Anatomy of the Vertebrates, which included supervised laboratory activities.

### **Dr. John Ulici's Advice for the Course**

1. Begin the study of each unit by reading the lesson notes and the objectives in the Study Guide; read each objective summary and insist on each keyword and topic, learning the details from the eText and pay attention to figures and tables.
2. Be prepared to read the assigned eText chapter at least twice: once to get an overview and a second time to make notes; read each eText chapter in conjunction with the list of “Key Words and Topics” that appears in the Study Guide - this list specifies all the details that you must learn.
3. Use the questions in the eText, online learning resources, and the Study Guide as a check to ensure that you understand the lesson; make certain that you can define, and use in context, each of the key terms identified in the Study Guide, and that you understand the concepts and processes listed - make use of the ancillary materials provided along with the eText, such as the Revel website; follow the instructions in the Study Guide regarding the learning activities at the end of each lesson and the reflective questions at the end of each lesson.
4. As you complete the assigned readings, you may come across concepts that you do not understand. When this happens, try the following strategies. Reread the “difficult” part; make certain that you know the meanings of unfamiliar words. Read about the topic in another context, or in a work written by another author. Set the material aside for a while (not more than a day!), and then read it again. If you are still having difficulty with the material, consult your Academic Expert.
5. Establish the habit of weekly study: we estimate that you will need about 5–8 hours per week to complete this course within the 52-week course contract.
6. Maintain regular contact with your course Academic Expert (AE) to discuss issues and ask questions – you will have the best chance of being successful in the studies.
7. Read actively, not passively - when your attention lapses, do not continue, as you will be wasting your time; take a break, and then try again. When you have read a portion of a chapter, stop, and try to remember the main points; if you cannot remember, re-read the textbook and your study notes, and then try again.
8. When you receive the feedback to your assignment from your AE, go over it carefully, and pay particular attention to your AE's comments.

Thank you very much to Dr. Ulici for his valuable advice!

### **Questions?**

If you have any further questions regarding the course, please do not hesitate to contact the Course Coordinator at [fst\\_success@athabascau.ca](mailto:fst_success@athabascau.ca). Happy studying!

*Karen's taking her Computing Science degree at AU, learning French and Korean, and is into K-pop, SF, and politics*

## Positivity Appeals to Positive People

Marie Well



When we are positive toward others, they respond kindly. Positivity builds beautiful bonds, cements friendships, and bursts with wonderful feelings.

For instance, smiling and laughing throughout the day sounds and looks like a kitten that purrs nonstop. What a beautiful energy. And, oh, does laughter feel good for the person who releases it.

I once babysat two cats. One cat purred nonstop. It was the cat everyone loved. It's so easy and blissful to be that cat. Just smile and laugh all day, even if it feels forced. Feeling that laughter gently massages our heart and tummy and delights all those around us.

To be sure, I once had a colleague who giggled all day, at least a hundred times a day. I didn't understand why she did that, until I tried it myself. It feels heavenly to laugh! Laughter lets the spirit free. And laughter draws others into our hearts.

Another way to build bonds through positivity is to try not to take anything personally and don't anger. It's the people with the brightest smiles and warmest eyes who climb the highest, at least in a corporate setting.

Also, be generous. Sending someone a gift, especially a homemade one, says, "I love you!" Two souls intertwine when sharing gifts that develop the soul, or that demonstrate beauty, or that help build dreams, or that foster any positive trait.

Another means to build bonds is through sharing jokes. Humor reduces tension and stress. But if we're not funny, we can at least share a smile or warm laugh with others. Humor is another way to draw positive people into our circle of love. For example, I recently made a friend with a woman who had multiple near death experiences. I just love her energy and spirituality, and she loves mine. When I talk with her on text, I feel a suffocating hug from nowhere that fills me with joy. My friend calls it a hug from God. And many other spiritual events seem to occur when I speak with her. Drawing positive friends into our lives begets even more positive energy.

Also, to build bonds through positivity, see everyone as a beloved friend. See the sheer beauty of every living thing, enjoying the sounds and existences of even our tiniest friends, the insects. Relish in the purrs and calls of the geese. Celebrate everyone's existence and be blissfully in love with the beauty of everyone, even our enemies. Loving others is more delicious than a calorie-free hot fudge brownie sundae drenched in strawberry whipped cream.

Additionally, expect nothing from anyone. Don't blame a soul. Never hold a grudge. But give everything. This makes us prime targets for the richest of relationships.

And if we ever get hit by tragedy, stay clear of the darkness. Seek the higher ground—the light. The healthier and more positive we are during hardships, the easier it is to reach the heights. Plus, doing the right thing, although it may seem hard, is the most rewarding thing we could ever do—for ourselves and for many others, some of whom we may never meet.





Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## A Mom's Lesson

*Dear Barb:*

*I am the mother of two—one 18-year-old and one 12-year-old. I have worked all my life at low paying jobs and finally decided to try some online courses to see if I could do it. So far, I love it, though that is not what I'm writing about. The problem is my 18-year-old just finished high school and I always assumed he would go on to university or college. He has done well in school and it just seemed natural for him to continue, however it seems that was not his plan.*

*My son just informed me he is going to travel the countryside for a year with a friend that he recently met. They are planning on leaving in September, with the hope that the pandemic will be over or under control. I am so devastated. I couldn't say anything when he told me; it took me about week to be able to respond. I tried to tell him I did not want him to go and that he needed to go to school. His response was that this is an educational experience and he was definitely going. I can't believe he is just going to defy me like that. His father tells me to back off, that Jordan is a mature, responsible boy and we should support his venture. I am fearful he will not return to school and never be able to get a good job and make a good living. Do you think we should just let our son throw away his future?*

*Thanks for your input, Georgina.*

Hi Georgina:

You are just being a mother who is learning to let go. I agree with your husband, you have to let him go. Honestly, you really can't stop him if this is what he wants to do. He is 18 years old, the choice is his. If you argue with him and try to stop him from going you will only cause problems in your relationship with him and you don't want him to leave under those conditions. He may be back sooner than you think, or he may find his niche in life. A parent's job is to support their children, but that doesn't mean you can't caution them about potential problems he may encounter. Share your wisdom with your son, without being critical and making him feel like you are treating him like a child. When you begin parenting adult children, your style has to change. You will encounter differences in your personalities and behaviours, and you have to accept these differences as you would a friend's differences. Offer support and encouragement while maintaining the lines of communication. I found a book you may want to check out on Amazon: *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties* 2nd edition by Jeffery Jensen Arnett. Best of luck Georgina.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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.*



**Chazz Bravado**  
Cruising the Now

**Wanda Waterman**

Yo, chicky-poo,  
the Chazz Man  
just got back  
from a  
spiritual  
retreat!



Baby,  
I am  
**PRESENT!**



I am  
living  
in the **NOW!**

If you're cruisin'  
for a conscious dude,  
just consider me  
your spiritual  
landing pad!



What?!  
Meditate?  
Together?!  
What the—?



Oh, yeah,  
heh heh.  
"Meditate."

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

## IMPORTANT DATES

- May 20: [AUSU Student Council Meeting](#)
- May 25: [Next AUSU Newsletter Edition](#)
- May 25: [AUSU By-Election nominations open](#)
- June 11: [Virtual Convocation 2021](#)



Explore the services, support, and resources offered with your AUSU membership! [Our Services](#) include:

- [Student Advocacy supports](#)
- [Peer Course Reviews](#)
- [LinkedIn Learning access](#)
- [VMock Resume Review](#)
- [Pharmacy Savings: Alliance Pharmacy](#)
- [Eyewear Discounts: FYidoctors](#)
- [Awards & Bursaries programs](#)
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- and so much more!

For more information or assistance with these valuable supports, contact the Member Services Coordinator at [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org).

## STUDENT COUNCIL BY-ELECTION

# GET INVOLVED MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Nominations Open May 25, 2021

Join the team in the upcoming [AUSU Student Council by-election](#) and make a difference with fellow students! Nominations open May 25 to fill six seats, with the election in June 2021.

## Why Serve on Student Council?

It's a student leadership opportunity you don't want to miss! AUSU councillors represent AU undergrads and advocate on their behalf. Get involved, build experience, and represent your peers as part of an [amazing team](#)!

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of AUSU student councillors, check out [Policy 2.14](#).

Nomination forms will be available when nominations open on May 25, 2021.



AUSU has launched a Discord server to celebrate and support sexual and gender diversity in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at AU. Why not [come by](#) and say hi?



We are currently accepting applications for the role of Chief Returning Officer for the upcoming by-election. Discover more about this exciting opportunity [here](#).

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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

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## THE VOICE

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