



# THE VOICE

Vol 31 Issue 26 - 2023-07-07

## Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

## Tender Relations

A Tasty Piece of Fiction

## Organized Crime, Part III

Running the Numbers



*Plus:  
Colder than the Sea  
Psychosocial Hazards  
and much more!*

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**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

### The Things You Don't Know

Karl Low



Go [here](#), watch the video. Do it now. I'll wait.

This is the kind of thing that AU researchers are helping to spearhead, and, old fogey though I may be, I think it might be something that works, not only to promote its own message but also that of AU as a university that people might want to go to. And, maybe it says something about me, but seeing poor Kai's imagined symptoms just had me laughing.

There's actually quite a few things scattered about the AU site that you probably never see, because, let's be honest, your busy with your courses, your life, and everything else, but just under the hood, it seems there's stuff going on at AU.

Recently my partner had an issue with her student financing involving a form that hadn't been processed on time, leading to courses being closed even though an extension should have been provided. We knew this could be a long fight, as previous dealings with AU's student finance and/or registrar department had always left us, let's say underwhelmed. This time, though, we were surprised. Not only did the department readily acknowledge a mistake had been made, it fixed the

problem as well—no fuss, no muss. Now, I know that's probably still not the experience of all students, but I seem to remember a time when it wasn't the experience of any of them.

So, this got me digging into the AU site a bit and I came across that fun little video, as well as pictures of the convocation, which now has me kicking myself that I didn't get anybody reporting on it. Of course, part of the problem is that (and here's a little secret) there's not very many current students writing for *The Voice Magazine* anymore. And that's something I want to change.

Sure, we've got a core of writers, but most of them graduated quite some time ago. And it's been a while since I've been a student myself, so it's been harder to keep tabs on what's going on at AU at the student level. Of course, in some respects the same concerns are still there, tuition's too high, assignments can take too long to get back, some tutors really aren't that helpful (while others are great), some courses seem almost laughably out of date, etc., but there's also a host of new issues that students are having, and some of the old issues may have been dealt with. Either way, I need more people with actual current student experience who can bring that to *The Voice Magazine*.

And you don't have to sign on for a regular article, maybe there's just something bugging you about how AU does things, maybe you've found a really amazing tutor or project somewhere on the AU site. Maybe you just need some extra pocket money. Whatever it is, I'm looking for someone you to contribute your views to the magazine. Even if you don't know what it is you'd write about, if you get in touch, I can let you in on a few things I'm specifically looking to cover in the Magazine.

Meanwhile, this week, we're featuring a Minds We Meet with a former nursing student, now pursuing a general studies degree, a tasty little piece of fiction—if you like the creepy side, a deeper delve into the world of national security, reviews, scholarships, events, advice, inspiration, thoughtful explorations and more!

Enjoy the read!

# MINDS WE MEET



*The Voice Magazine* recently had a chance to chat with Courtney (she/they), a Bachelor of General Studies student with a focus on Anthropology and Indigenous Studies, who is “currently residing on the traditional territories of the ləkʷəŋən peoples with the colonized name of Victoria, BC. Courtney stated, “I currently reside on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ speaking people as an uninvited guest. I have resided on these lands since 2005 and am very grateful to call these beautiful lands home. I spent my childhood and early 20’s on xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh and siʔámθət traditional territories. My mother, Lori Montgomery, was born on the unceded Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc territory. My grandmother, Lenore Montgomery, was born and raised on xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh and siʔámθət traditional territories. I am of mixed European heritage, including Dutch and Eastern European on my father's side and English and Irish on my mother's.”

Post degree, Courtney hopes “to attend medical school,” with a focus “on focusing on rural medicine with marginalized populations (mental health addictions) from the longitudinal aspect.”

On a more personal note, although Courtney grew up in Vancouver, they moved to Victoria in 2005. Courtney added, “As much as I try to move away from here I just can't. I currently work as a licensed practical nurse and nurse continence advisor in the urodynamics clinic in Victoria BC. I have been a nurse for 13.5 years and, as much as I love my job, I have a huge desire and need to advance my education and hopefully become a physician. I am not one for talking about myself; this is going to be a challenge for my medical school application.”

Courtney continued, “I have been on a nursing board for Urological nursing for six years. I volunteer for a dog rescue organization based in Victoria and Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. I love to garden, drink wine, and hang out in my hot tub. I tend to be more introverted unless I am put into a situation where I am required to be extroverted. As a Gemini, I am able to adapt to many situations. I have been married to my best friend for the past 19 years. He reminds me every day I've just how wonderful it is to be living right now, even with all of the destruction happening in the world. Indigenous rights and sovereignty are very close to my heart and I work every day to unlearn all the colonized information and ways of knowing that I have lived and brought up with. I am very fortunate to live in Victoria and enjoy living in my own home, where I'm able to garden and eat from the land.”

Courtney had some great study tips for fellow AU students. “I best study with snacks, and multiple types of beverages, preferably in a quiet area where I can focus. It could be a room at

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my local college, in my office at home, at the library, or at a coffee shop. I always have my trusty headphones to listen to classical music. I find that having a spreadsheet with deadlines keeps me accountable for finishing my courses on time.”

They also had some advice for new students and/or prospective students. “Stay on top of your studies, set up a plan and try to stick to it as closely as possible. Treat it like you would a job or in-class education. Life does happen, but if you remember why you started, you will always finish.”

When this busy learner is not studying, Courtney finds time “to run, garden, and listen to music, preferably live music.” They added, “I have two dogs that mean everything to me, and spending time with them brings me a ton of joy. I also like to have a glass of wine with friends. I love a good meal, some people buy things, but I would much rather spend money on food and experiences.”

They have also found time to travel, describing some recent adventures. “We could play into the cliché of that one time I went to Europe or a road trip through the southern states. However, my most memorable vacation was August 2022. I went to Mexico for five days by myself. I sat on my girlfriend's deck, read three books, and watched *Below Deck*. I went for walks and meals by myself and just enjoyed the silence of myself.”

Courtney's most memorable AU course so far has been INST 301: Indigenous Education. “That course is a must-have for everybody. I feel as though it should be a requirement, just as English 255 is for every degree. I am unsure as to why it is not a required course for everybody. I found the material engaging, my tutor was phenomenal and willing to provide me with feedback in a constructive manner to assist with my learning, as a settler, that course shifted my life and how I live it to this day. I recommend everybody take that course, and everyone that does agrees with me. It is a life-changing course,” they explained.

However, their experience with communication with AU course tutors has been mixed. “Some are wonderful and provide fantastic feedback while ensuring that you have a grasp of the subject matter. Others are not accessible, do not respond to emails or questions and, take forever to mark assignments, then send rude responses when you inquire about the length of time between assignments,” they stated.

*The Voice Magazine* also asked Courtney what their first project would be if they were the new president of AU. “I would audit each course and have all the tutors for each course come together to do PowerPoints or videos teaching the material so that the students have something other than the textbook to engage with. I feel this could alleviate a lot of unnecessary emails and allow students and instructors to connect to each other and the material.”

Courtney also shared their most valuable lesson learned in life. “Stay humble. When somebody wants to teach you something, listen. Negative feedback is just as good as positive feedback in some circumstances. Grow and learn from your mistakes and others.”

And their proudest moment? “Figuring out that I am smart enough and deserve all the good things that happen to me.”

As a final note, Courtney stated, “Post-secondary education is a journey. I have discovered more about my like and dislikes than I can talk about. Don't believe everything you are taught in our colonized systems, do proper research. I know more today than I did a year ago, and that is because I have had the honour of tutors and professors believing in me and pushing me to think outside the box and challenge myself and the systems.” Best of luck Courtney!

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At times, in an online learning environment, it can feel like you are all alone, but across the nation and around the globe, students just like you are also pursuing their Athabasca University (AU) studies! Each week, *The Voice Magazine* will be bringing you some of these stories. If you would like to be featured next, do not hesitate to get in touch!

*Natalia Iwanek (she/they) is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Political Science at Athabasca University.*



## Tender Relations

There's more than one way to stir the pot

Lucy Djorno



I could tell when Susan walked in the door after work. She knew something was different. She usually came in warily, looking around to see where my mother was, or what had changed during the day. Today, I saw the carefully controlled look of surprise on her face. Nothing appeared to have changed. But everything was different.

Mother was gone.

Mother and Susan never really hit it off. After years of urging me to "find a girl" and coaching me while I courted Susan, Mother did a 180 after Susan and I got married. Whereas before, Mother was full of praise for Susan, after the wedding, Susan couldn't seem to do anything right.

Mother lived only a few houses away from us, and every day she spent more and more time at our house. She watched Susan like a hawk, passing judgement on everything she did.

Susan would cook a meal, and mother would complain that it was overcooked, undercooked, too bland, too spicy. Sometimes Mother would barge into the kitchen and tell Susan she was preparing something the wrong way, and Mother would take over the meal prep.

Susan was a good housekeeper, but Mother thought she was slack. Mother would drag her finger across some obscure surface and hold her slightly dusty finger up accusingly for Susan to see.

I recognized Susan was trying to keep the peace. But it was a strain on her—and on us. I knew I should take Susan's side and stand up to Mother. I meant to, over and over. Truly. I would just tell Mother she could only come over when we invited her. But I never could do it.

As the months went by, Susan started staying later and later at work. Mother had all but taken over the meal preparation by that time, and Susan had given up trying. I usually got home from work a couple hours before Susan. I should have been doing more. At least I should have learned to cook.

Mother, it seemed, spent most of her days at our place. To fill her idle hours, she took to rearranging. Kitchen cupboards, bathroom cupboards, even the clothes in my closet. She rearranged the furniture in the living room once, but I managed to put it all back before Susan got home.

I guess I shouldn't have been surprised when Susan gave me an ultimatum. And Mother shouldn't have been surprised by my choice.

So, when Susan came home from work that day, everything had changed. Nothing was out of place; the house was in the same order as it had been that morning. The aroma of supper wafted out from the kitchen.

But the chef had changed. I found instructions online for a special stew. I'd taken the day off work so I could gather all the ingredients and dice everything to bite-sized cubes. It's easy once you get going. I was really pleased how it turned out.

We sat down for supper, just the two of us. I'd even put candles on the table. I poured Susan and me some wine, and then ladled out the stew. I watched Susan's face carefully as she tasted her first spoonful.

"Did you make this, Bill?" she asked. "It's delicious."

I think that was the moment I knew everything was going to be okay. We'd made it through a difficult situation but everything was resolved satisfactorily.

As I ate, I watched Susan attack her stew with gusto. She even smiled at me a few times. It was so nice to just have the two of us—the way it was surely meant to be.

"Bill, this is the best meal I've had in months," said Susan, between mouthfuls. "The meat is so tender. Where'd you get it?"

"Oh," I gave a vague wave. "It's from my mother."



## Organized Crime Canada's National Security Threat, Part III

Alek Golijanin



In last week's edition of *The Voice Magazine*, I wrote about the role that the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians play in keeping the promise of Canada alive and well. All that was remaining was to explore "national" security through a provincial lens; that path went through the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and their Intelligence and Organized Crime Committee, and the Criminals Intelligence Service Ontario, but it was brief and eventually looped back to the federal level, with Criminal Intelligence Service Canada.

### "Ontario's" Intelligence and Organized Crime Committee

The Intelligence and Organized Crime Committee (the Committee) is a committee created by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), and it is comprised of high-ranking members in the field of law enforcement, but under the Committee's "Leadership"

section, it only listed the Committee's Chair, a member of the Ontario Provincial Police, and no other members.

The Committee's mandate is to focus on supporting the efforts of police services in Ontario in combating organized crime by raising awareness of the impacts of organized crime communities and engaging in advocacy with government and other partners on behalf of police organizations. The Committee has partnerships with government, law enforcement organizations, community organizations and other public sectors to identify and promote law enforcement and intelligence-led strategies, all related to anti-organized crime initiatives including engaging in public policy and legislative discussions.

What makes this Committee even more interesting is that the OACP has 1,200+ members who serve with the RCMP, OPP, First Nations, and Municipal Police Services across all of Ontario, and organizations in the field of law enforcement from the public and private sector, and that the only way to join is if you get "sponsored" by an OACP member that is in good standing. However, there is also a membership fee associated with that process.

The fact that there is a membership fee associated with a professional association should not come as surprise because all professional associations require their members to pay fees, but the nuances between paying for a membership and having a "committee" that liaises with policy makers and different levels of policing agencies when comes to intelligence and organized crime matters seems off. Nonetheless, the OACP had some impressive advocacy-related asks.

In 2018 the OACP advocated for information sharing between police and non-police entities, then, in 2020, they advocated for the urgent replacement of the Automated Criminal Intelligence Information System (ACIIS) for law enforcement in Canada, and in 2021 they repeated their 2020 ask for the urgent replacement of the ACIIS for law enforcement in Canada. The OACP seemed to believe there were gaps with the functionalities of ACIIS. So, what was this "ACIIS" technology and who was behind it?

### **The Automated Criminal Intelligence Information System—Who is Behind it**

The ACIIS is a Canadian database that was created in 1976 by Criminal Intelligence Service Canada (CISC) and it serves as a national intelligence repository for policing agencies across Canada on organized and serious crime. All policing agencies contributed to the database by cooperating with one another in the collection, collation, evaluation, analysis, and dissemination of criminal intelligence. However, there are three categories of use, with category 1 being policing agencies with full policing powers, category 2 being agencies with limited policing responsibilities, and category 3 which were agencies that were without direct policing powers but who assisted policing agencies.

In the early 2000s, CISC adopted a three-module structure to how they carried out provincial threat assessments. The first module focused on strategic threat assessments focusing on things like legitimate or environmental drivers, criminal linkages a person may have, organized crime groups, criminal markets, criminal harms, forecast, and recommendations. The second module focused on organized crime group inventory and having inventories on all or a specific number of significant criminal groups operating within their respective province, as well as a national strategic group inventory to determine significant, inter-provincial, national, and international-level crime threats like group sizes, group associations, business associations, criminal activities, sources of support, and ports of entry. The third module focused on tactical profiles of organized crime groups or individuals and having integrated threat assessments: tactical profiles on groups or individuals engaged in organized and serious crime, including details such as personal data, position and influence, capabilities, criminal background, finances, and vulnerabilities and

opportunities. These modules were intended to ensure a more consistent approach to national assessments of organized crime and to allow for more standardized comparisons between provinces.

In the grand scheme of things, CISC was supposed to support the efforts to reduce the harm caused by organized crime through the delivery of criminal intelligence products and services, informing partners, government, and other stakeholders about criminal markets in Canada. CISC's executive committee was comprised of 20 Chiefs of Police and RCMP Commanding Officers from across Canada and chaired by the Commissioner of the RCMP.

CISC had a national bureau that was responsible for the delivery of criminal intelligence products and services as well as the maintenance of a criminal intelligence databank on organized crime, but it also had 10 provincial bureaus, including Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, which operated independently and with a focus on activities within their respective provinces and the collection, analysis and production of criminal intelligence and services, which would get submitted to the national bureau to carry holistic threat assessments.

In addition to ACIIS, CISC also published a yearly report on organized crime in Canada, and it was the only national public report on organized crime by law enforcement, with its goal being to inform and educate the public on the effect of organized crime as it affects every community and region in Canada. So, I turned to the RCMP and requested a copy of CISC's latest report on organized crime, "*Criminal Intelligence Service Canada 2022 Public Report on Organized Crime in Canada*".

### **The 2022 Public Report on Organized Crime in Canada**

The RCMP provided me with CISC's 2022 *Public Report on Organized Crime in Canada*, and the 17-page report is quite the read. The report found that there were over 3,000 organized crime groups in Canada, and 647 of those groups were deemed significant enough to get legitimized by CISC. Out of the 647 groups, 14 were assessed as national high-level threats, 149 were assessed as medium-level threats and 484 were assessed as low-level threats.

CISC's integrated threat assessment tool was what was used to score organized crime groups on 9 criteria: public sector infiltration, private sector infiltration, association to other crime

## **AU-thentic Events**

### **Upcoming AU Related Events**

#### **Library Chat**

Tues, Jul 11, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AU Library  
[www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html](http://www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html)  
No pre-registration needed; access through chat box on home page

#### **Library Chat**

Wed, Jul 12, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AU Library  
[www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html](http://www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html)  
No pre-registration needed; access through chat box on home page

#### **Writing an Abstract for a Conference**

Wed, Jul 12, 1:00 to 2:00 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AU's Write Site and Faculty of Graduate Studies  
[news.athabascau.ca/events/writing-an-abstract-for-a-conference-2/](http://news.athabascau.ca/events/writing-an-abstract-for-a-conference-2/)  
Register through above link

#### **Library Chat**

Thur, Jul 13, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AU Library  
[www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html](http://www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html)  
No pre-registration needed; access through chat box on home page

#### **Accessibility, Accommodations, and the Student Experience**

Thur, Jul 13, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT  
Online via Zoom

Hosted by AUSU  
[www.eventbrite.ca/e/accessibility-accommodations-and-the-student-experience-tickets-671794203547](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/accessibility-accommodations-and-the-student-experience-tickets-671794203547)  
Register through above link

*All events are free unless otherwise noted.*

groups, technological capabilities, geographical positioning, criminal enterprise, specialized skills, money laundering, and use of violence. It is important to note that there were other ranking systems in place that would further classify organized crime group threats and make distinctions between the threats they posed at the provincial level and federal level.

The statistics related to Canada's public sector identified Canada as one of the least corrupt countries and it rated very low for public sector corruption, but it found that 4% of organized crime groups (29) were believed to have influence or access within Canadian public sector agencies or departments. This access was primarily at the local and regional level, but it was also believed that some groups were leveraging the benefits of this access for interprovincial and international criminal activities. The big shock in all of this is that 57% of the groups were reported to have "unknown" involvement in public sector infiltration and that was attributed to underreporting due to investigative sensitivities. However, government leaks and security breaches are very low, and infiltration was believed to be limited.

The statistics related to Canada's private sector identified that 41% of organized crime groups were linked to 1,682 businesses and 30% of these businesses were being leveraged to control or direct private sector businesses within various sectors and used to further criminal activities. The primary business sectors linked to these groups were food and beverage services, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, construction, auto dealerships, arts, entertainment, and recreation, and even finance and insurance. Out of these businesses, those associated with transportation and warehousing sector, would facilitate the movement of drugs and other contraband while those associated with finance and insurance would facilitate financial crimes like fraud and money laundering.

When it came to national high-level threat groups and key facilitators, there were 14 threat groups and 15 key facilitators and they were based in British Columbia (12), Ontario (10) Quebec (6) and Alberta (1). These high-level threats had networks that extended across Canada and even internationally: North America (14), Central America and the Caribbean (11), Asia (9), South America (6), Europe (5), Africa (2), and Australia (1). To further their criminal activities, these high-level threats were involved in exploiting the private sector (24), illegal gaming (11), drug importation (8), fraud (4), illicit cannabis (3), and public sector infiltration (1).

### **More Investigative work is Required**

Now, what seemed a little strange was that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police seemed to have taken issue with Criminal Information Service Canada's 2021-version of the Automated Criminal Intelligence Information System, and given the scariness of the 2022 public report on organized crime in Canada, it was important to determine if this position was one that was shared across Canada and by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and perhaps determining where they stood on matters related to national security and organized crime. Those details and more will be in my final installment of this series, hopefully available in the next edition of *The Voice Magazine*.

### **References**

Criminal Intelligence Service Canada, 2022. *2022 Report: Organized crime in Canada*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cisc-scrs.gc.ca/media/2022/2022-10-28-eng.htm>.

*Alek Golijanin is an AU alum who considers himself a gentleman first, a scholar second, and a combat sports fanatic third. In that order.*



## Ways to Achieve Professional Greatness

Marie Well



Is What makes us at AU special to potential employers? Exposure to *The Voice Magazine* articles promotes our personal and professional development. At my former brick-and-mortar university, many of its newspaper articles did not groom me for professional or even personal growth. However, *The Voice Magazine's* articles delve into ways to improve our well-being and discover opportunities. And in this article, I will reveal some professional development secrets I almost held back on discussing—some of which were given to me by a director who earned nearly half a million a year.

**Become a leader at a professional association.** I'm a private person, so I wouldn't do this. But if we want a list of relevant professional organizations, we can ask ChatGPT. (I use Ask AI for my ChatGPT phone app). For instance, we can join the Calgary Marketing Association or the American Marketing Association if we're into marketing. I want to sit remotely on a board for an international marketing association once I acquire more designations. Any association or organization with which we develop a leadership role can greatly impact our career potential.

**Learn how to use career-relevant software.** If we work for a company, software producers are chomping to give us free demonstrations on how to use their software. And they'll also provide lots of free training opportunities. Lynda.com and Udemy.com are two great ways to learn software quickly. And what better way to find which software to learn than to search job portals like Indeed.com or Monster.ca to see the software that the best-paying jobs require. So getting a head start on learning those softwares could give a leap start on our career potential.

**Develop our communication skills.** I've been taking courses from SocialSelf, although other options exist to learn communication and social skills, such as Udemy or Lynda.com. After taking my class, I interact wonderfully with everybody I encounter. And today, Canada Day, a merchant gave me free food because we got along so great. And I had a wonderful conversation with a woman in the Subway lineup. My confidence in social situations is skyrocketing. It's quite profound how learning simple communication skills can benefit our world. And the implications of rapport-building for professional development are powerful.

**Read books that benefit professional development.** I read the book *Mindset* by Carol S. Dweck, *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, and *Drive* by Daniel H. Pink. These are all great for professional development. But some classics exist online, including *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* by Kerry Patterson. We could listen to the audiobooks while we work. After all, knowledge is power.

**Develop a personal brand.** I have branded myself on my deepest value: love. To brand ourselves, analyze what makes us shine--and everybody shines uniquely. It might be our hobby, familial bonds, or other traits. We could post this on a blog, on LinkedIn, or through Help A Reporter Out (HARO). If we use the free HARO, I recommend pitching ideas to the Authority Magazine for branding purposes. Pick a topic they feature that fits our interests. And then submit a pitch. They send us interview questions; we write and submit the interview responses. It's important to

edit the write-ups before the final submission. And it's great for personal and professional branding.

**Map out measurable career goals.** Ever since I discovered the value of the Canada Job Grant, I've committed to investing in education and credentials year-round. I'm in the second level of a critical thinking and problem-solving course, and I love it. My goals include raising my income through course production and affiliate marketing. Great plans for us may include developing soft skills and leadership abilities or acquiring certifications and expertise. And once we are in the workforce, invest in our education non-stop! That alone will give us AU students value beyond our degrees for any organization. So, set professional goals every chance we get.

**Develop our writing skills.** My writing could have been better when I started writing for The Voice Magazine. But writing two articles every week, especially while living a busy life, can quickly amp up writing abilities. And many vocations require a level of competence with writing. I recommend using Grammarly's free version for editing purposes. And a trick to get our articles noticed is using a free keyword tool for SEO called Keyword Tool. And, of course, becoming a fellow Voice Writer is an excellent option, too.

So, those are some ideas for professional development. I gave away a few secrets for success, some of which my brother, who was the Global Finance Director of an international company—and made a killing, gave me. But that's what makes us at AU powerful. We don't let limitations stop us from achieving greatness. Or else, why would we be in academia? And professional development is one route to realizing our unlimited, amazing potential.



## Fly on the Wall

Katherine Hepburn and Pinocchio: Two Paths to AU-thenticity!

Jason Sullivan



Don't we, as distance students, sound a bit like Pinocchio, with our study-minded conscience as Jiminy Cricket and our benefactors as ol' Gepeto? The pine-based puppet, like our digital avatar selves, promised, *"I will study, I will work, I will do all that you tell me, for indeed I have become weary of being a puppet, and I wish at any price to become a boy"* (Collodi, 1883). Pinocchio's life journey echoes our mission to grow and learn and be real pupils. In fact, our desire for authenticity is shared with brick-and-mortar students who also seek to experience life-affirming education from their institutions. We get what we give, not what is handed to us by our superiors. Unlike buying real estate on the moon and calling ourselves pioneers, we can't purchase a diploma; we have to work for it and, like Pinocchio, avoid too many dalliances with our personal equivalent of the Pleasure Island.

For all of us, too, lurking in the darkness behind our eyes is a dominant superstructure of culture and ideals. Core beliefs, often unspoken, pull a lot of strings in our lives and if we become puppets of our dogmas, we lose the will to learn with an open mind. Our essential drive to overcome inanities of external influence is what furnishes a sense of critical thinking; this is why our tutors

typically accept any point of view in an essay so long as we argue with quotes from textbooks and course material. Nevertheless, as life unfolds, we are forever yanked, hauled, and drawn in varying directions.

### **Katherine Hepburn: Breaking the Tethers of Social Expectations**

Enter Katherine Hepburn, one of the most iconic independent spirits in classic Hollywood, whose individualized identity illustrates the best about AU as a solitary and edifying life pursuit. In a film titled *Holiday*, she claimed that “we’re all grand at seventeen and after that the sickness sets in” (Stewart & Buckman). Maybe we’d be wise, when defining our personal expectations for authenticity in our academic journey, to reach back to our late teenage selves for some inspiration. At that age, for instance, the strait-edge (ie. no dope, no booze) punk band Minor Threat exclaimed “go to college, be a man, what’s the f\*ckin’ deal, it’s not how old I am, it’s how old I feel!” To be sure, the older we become the more valuable our sense of youthful joviality becomes. The weight of the world is not something new either; memes simply reflect our natural tendency to look outside ourselves and, at times, see a long list of problems to be solved and rights to be wronged. When the world becomes a project like our identities there’s no end to fixer-upper issues to address. At AU too, there’s a perpetual plethora of assignments to work on when we could otherwise be lollygagging through a meatball day of random pleasures. Just like Pinocchio. To really find our groove we need to see the light at the end of the tunnel of blue screen laptop light.

There’s a reason that wisdom often harkens back to our innocent halcyon days of yore— when life was a shimmering blissful sequence of momentary pleasures: ice cream, water pistols, and running hither and yon, for instance. Truly finding meaning in our lives and our futures involves transcending the here and now and remembering that, at some level, time gives only a warped view of our progress, and that includes the present. The present can’t be our only concern because, given our imaginations and memories, we also live always-already in the past and future. Like a rainbow or a thunderclap, inspiration can be made, retained, and grasped and then just as rapidly whisked away into obscurity. Knowing this is to know that we can be content during each phase of our life’s journey. Life doesn’t have to be a struggle for meaning, at least not perpetually.

John Kabat-Zinn, perhaps as a rejoinder to those who feel that they must somehow always *go* somewhere in their being and with their lives, stated unequivocally that “wherever you go, there you are” (1994). So, as we proceed with our studies and the larger weave of our life, let’s remember to enjoy the journey. While we were never quite as wooden as Pinocchio nor as fleshy as our newborn selves, nor even as real as he comes to feel (well, maybe metamorphically), we can always be aware of those ephemeral strings that tug and yank us in myriad directions and may hamper our sense of being in the now *and* in the future.

Obscured motives and meanings abound in university life, from choosing our disciplinary major to picking our whimsical electives, to deciding how to justify our existence to others who ask whether AU is a real university. Hanging over us is the query many hear about whether AU is a *real* university akin to, say, the University of Alberta (Go Golden Bears!) or University of Calgary (Go Dinos!). Possibly a solid nickname for imagined sports team (Go AU Auroras?) would help matters but, in the end, what matters most is our individual sense of achievement as we slog through coursework. My Italian-Canadian wife reminds me also that Pinocchio may be an exemplar of the LGBTQ+ community; his saintly journey is hinted at by his name which, although referencing the Pine wood of his makeup, might also be a reference to Italian slang for an effete, homosexual, male: one who is a bit *finocchio* (2023). There’s even an accompanying hand gesture. Of course, nowadays we can be a real version of whatever gender we feel ourselves to be!

“*What are you going to do with that?*” is a phrase, regrettably, that haunts our studies in a far more

substantial way than it does when a culinary interloper notes that we haven't eaten the pickle on our plate. In the end, though, all of life depends on how we account *for* ourselves *to* ourselves; yet, AU can no more give us purpose than any other vocation, hobby or career. A healthy perspective on our studies surely includes a narrative leading us to an ultimate goal: a sense of ourselves as an authentic version of our intellectual identity. After all, we may fool some of ourselves some of the time (by, for instance looking busy by typing furiously) but we can't deceive our heart of hearts and brain of brains all the time. Like Pinocchio, to be our best version of ourselves means to fit our personal definition of a real pupil.

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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.



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

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

#### AU Facebook Page

**Tips and tricks.** A poster is starting their first study period with AU and asks for tips or mistakes to avoid as they get started. One helpful commenter highly recommends introducing yourself to the course tutor at the very start of your contract period, as she has noticed she gets better responses from tutors when asking questions or requesting reference letters.

#### reddit

**Bad tutor blues.** An AU student enrolled in an English degree is feeling disappointed with the feedback and grading she is getting from her tutors. She is considering switching to a different university. The comments show mixed responses—some agree with the poster while others say that they have had positive experiences with tutors. One commenter suggests that AU tutors are seriously underpaid and overworked.

#### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: “A new animated open educational resource from #AthabascaU researchers aims to promote vaccine confidence and help youth understand how to navigate information and misinformation online. <https://news.athabascau.ca/research/au-researchers-launch-open-educational-resource-to-combat-misinformation/>”

@aulibarchives tweets: “Interested in Academic Integrity? Check out the recording of our latest “Who, Me? Cheat?” webinar with AU Write Site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6v2ZHyHMOV0&feature=youtu.be>”



## Have You Tried Sticky Rice Dumpling

Xine Wang



Sticky rice dumplings are a traditional Chinese food made with glutinous sticky rice, filled with a sweet or savoury filling, wrapped in bamboo leaves. It is also known as Zhong Zi. This Chinese delicacy has been enjoyed for centuries, particularly during the Dragon Boat Festival (around the time of summer solstice). These savory sticky rice dumplings are wrapped in bamboo leaves and filled with a variety of ingredients, creating a flavorful and satisfying treat. I recently spent a weekend with my family making these delicious snacks and also learning about the history behind this delicacy.

### Cultural Significance of the sticky rice dumpling:

The sticky rice dumpling holds a special place in Chinese culture and is closely associated with the Dragon Boat Festival which commemorates the ancient poet Qu Yuan. Legend has it that Qu Yuan, a revered poet and statesman of ancient China, drowned himself in a river as a form of protest against political corruption. Locals

threw sticky rice dumplings into the river to prevent fish from devouring his body and to honor his memory.

While in China this is a well celebrated festival, I would have missed it this year if it wasn't for my parents reminding me. Most Chinese festivals are based around the lunar calendar, and this festival is no different. Usually the dragon boat festival is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. At this time in China, many dragon boat races take place and women and men wear traditional colourful silk clothing, and, of course, enjoy a meal of sticky rice dumplings. The triangular shape of the dumplings symbolizes the boats used in the dragon boat races and serves as a reminder of Qu Yuan's sacrifice. Having immigrated from China when I was 7, I have some long distant memories of eating the sticky rice dumplings and attempting to "help" prepare the delicacy at the kitchen table.

### Ingredients and Fillings:

The main component of the Sticky Rice dumpling is glutinous or sticky rice, which gives the dumplings their distinctive chewy texture. The rice is soaked, then mixed with various ingredients to create delicious fillings. Common ingredients include:

- Meat: Traditional fillings often feature marinated pork belly, Chinese sausage (lap cheong), or shredded chicken.



- Salted Egg Yolk: A salted duck egg yolk is sometimes placed in the center of the filling, adding a rich and savory element to the dumpling.
- Beans: Mung beans or red beans can be added to provide a contrasting texture and additional flavor.
- Nuts: Peanuts or chestnuts are often incorporated for a delightful crunch and nutty taste.
- Dried Shrimp or Mushroom: These ingredients contribute a savory umami flavor and add depth to the fillings.

Making these bamboo dumplings requires a bit of patience and skill, as the dumplings need to be carefully wrapped to ensure they hold their shape during cooking, and the bamboo leaves are dried and hard, so need to be soaked in warm water overnight before they can be used.

Still, the work is worth it for these festival treats.

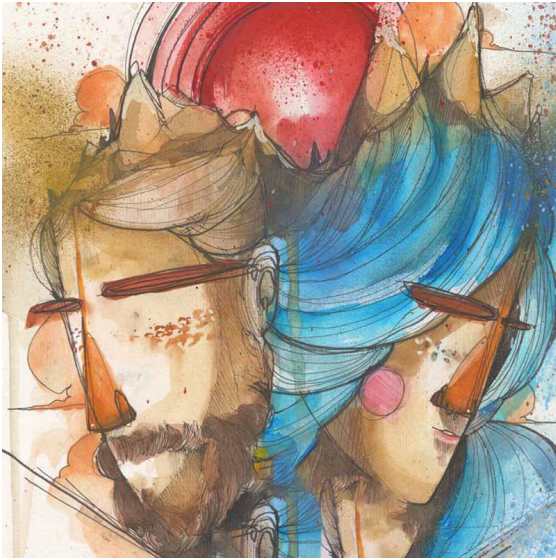


*Xine Wang is a post-graduate health-science AU student, aspiring clinician, globe-trotter, parrot-breeder and tea-connoisseur.*



## Music Review—Colder than the Sea

Jessica Young



**Artist:** Steve & Ginie Jackson

**Album:** *Colder Than The Sea*

**Single:** 7 Billion People

Montreal acoustic folk duo, Steve & Ginie Jackson have released their newest album, *Colder Than The Sea*. A music video for their feature single “7 Billion People” is available on [YouTube](#).

Steve and Ginie are a couple who met during a joint concert of their respective previous bands. According to the couple, “they started to dream about traveling and playing music, and they fell in love.”

*Colder Than The Sea* was created in Steve and Ginie’s home during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Their music has folk pop, bluegrass, and Irish/traditional influences, but *Colder Than The Sea* is “more mature, more thoughtful, with new

compositions that allows them to grow as musicians.”

*Colder Than The Sea* is comprised of twelve tracks: Into The Wild; 7 Billion People; Tear My Voice; Time To Dine; Everybody’s Calling; Karma; Happy; Take Me To The Bottle (featuring Jake Quell Bordel); Help Me!; The Hook; Fire Is Out; and Hearts.

The single “7 Billion People” is a love song about how the couple realized during lockdown that they don’t need anyone else to be happy—it’s the story of how they helped each other to grow and become better humans. The single follows the duo’s usual style—a guitar, a mandolin, and two voices, inspired by folk pop, bluegrass, and Irish/Trad influences. Their sound is reminiscent of Mumford and Sons or Peter, Paul, and Mary.

The lyrics are also extremely cute. The main line of the chorus goes, “seven billion people and all I see is you.” Another portion of the song has the lyrics, “I used to be a mess, I never really cared, I was never at my best, I was never really there, [...] before I met you, babe.” So sweet, and something I among many people can surely relate to in their own relationships.

The music video for “7 Billion People” was shot in San Diego, California was filmed, edited, and directed by Jeremy Royer. The video features Steve and Ginie gazing into each others’ eyes while singing and playing their instruments in various stunning locations. The scenes of the ocean and San Diego skyline are certainly beautiful, but Steve and Ginie steal the show with their cuteness. The video pairs so well with the context of the sweet song.

The rest of the album sounds similar to the single—pretty standard folk music. Although the sound is nothing revolutionary, the duo’s voices pair so well together and the lyrics are pure poetry. Most of the tracks are upbeat and catchy, but “Hearts”, “Karma” and “Tear My Voice” are slower, more painful songs. “Into The Wild” is definitely my favourite song of the album, with lyrics like, “You hate those bedtime stories/They always make you feel like you’re dying/But mostly, you hate the mornings/And everyone you’ll meet again today [...] Don’t tell me that you finally ran away into the night.”

Overall, I enjoyed *Colder Than The Sea*, and you can check out Steve & Ginie Jackson on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

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



**[blue rare]**  
**The Carnivals of Summer**

**Oliver Moorcraft-Sykes**



Of all the senseless cockwomble statements you tend to hear, the one that irritates me like capsicum on the gonads is "whatever doesn't destroy you makes you stronger". No, it doesn't. Trauma, most of the time, is survivable, but it certainly doesn't enhance your resilience. What really does make us stronger are those things that enable us to thrive. Things such as laughter, love, friendship, wonder, and joy. If we are able to find and experience enough of those during our lifetimes, then just maybe we will find ourselves strong enough to survive whatever storms come our way. This is why I look forward to the lazy, carefree circus of summer.

While winter is often a time of survival, summer is a time to find joy and thrive. There is a magic to this season of fireworks and fireflies that cannot be denied.

When I was a child, I loved the traveling carnival that would visit my dreary hometown each summer, setting up in a stretch of wasteland next to an abandoned, and reputedly haunted, factory building.

I loved everything about it. I loved the colored lights, the Ferris wheel and the tilt-a-whirl, the excitement of the midway crowds. I loved the merchant stalls, featuring fatty, sugary foods, fortune tellers behind beaded curtains, cheesy rock band t-shirts, black velvet artwork depicting tigers, tropical flowers, volcanoes, demons riding motorcycles, and Chinese dragons. All the sights and sounds; all the smells. It was as if a messy, chaotic electric fairyland had descended overnight from the heavens. Fairgrounds are everything that discotheques and parties should be, but never are. Now that I am deep into middle age, I am still searching high and low for the joy and light that I found there.

Perhaps most of all, I loved the row of stalls housing games to play. Air rifle shooting games, dart throwing games, games of skill and games of chance. The one that sticks most in my mind is a betting game involving painted tin horses and jockeys racing in slots around a miniature oval track. You would drop your coin in the slot and bet on the colour of your choice. (A great way for children to learn the ropes of gambling before one day betting their paychecks on the real thing! I remember being pretty charged up by winning a battery-powered plastic cigar with a glowing red tip - a more than usually profitable outcome for my sporting inclinations.)

And if anybody ever asked me to describe a perfect metaphor for mortality, I would absolutely choose that game. *And they're off!* Heart attack, highway crash, diabetic coma, brain tumour, cirrhotic liver, stray bullet, lung disease, train derailment, food poisoning, knife attack: which will be the first of these fast riders to pass the post? Of course, there's always the chance that some dark horse could make a sneaky move up the inside stretch and beat the odds. One could be playing second base in a beer league softball tournament, for example, and be bitten on the ankle by a deadly cobra escaped from a reptile farm. One could take a job going house-to-house selling aluminum siding, and encounter a doorknob slathered with novichok. One never knows. Mortality is always an unpredictable and dodgy sport, at best, and the fix might be in.

All you can do is pay your admission and enjoy the carnival. Wander the midway, fill your belly with hot dogs and donuts, buy yourself a sequined Led Zeppelin t-shirt, cover yourself in glow sticks, buckle yourself into a spinning teacup, throw your head back, and howl your heart out at the big yellow moon reflected in the cracked windows of the haunted, burned-out building. That's what summers are for: to make us wilder, happier, and stronger than we might otherwise have been.



## Beyond Literary Landscapes

### Death and Dying

**Natalia Iwanek**



From my early beginnings as a young introvert, the public library has always been a bit of a refuge. Years later, not much has changed, albeit with an additional affinity for endless hours spent scouring second-hand bookstores to add to my ever-growing “to-read” pile.

From one bookworm to another, this column will be underscoring and outlining various literary genres, authors, and recent reads and can serve as an introduction for those unfamiliar with these works, as a refresher for long-time aficionados, and maybe as an inspiration for readers to share their own suggested topics. Do you have a topic that you would like covered in this column? Feel free to [contact me](#) for an interview and a feature in an upcoming column.

#### Who

This week’s column focuses on a literary theme, which may, at first glance, appear quite bleak. However, as this is simply a natural process of life that we will all meet one day and

have surely considered, it is also a theme that has naturally been contemplated by various authors countless times, in both literature and non-fiction.

#### What

Some well-known works that focus on the literary theme of death and dying include *The Death of Artemio Cruz* by Carlos Fuentes, *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, and *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel García Márquez.

Other examples include *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, and *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi.

#### Where

These works are set in Mexico, Colombia, Italy, Imperial Russia, as well as the United States.

#### When

These works take place during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

#### Why

The theme of death and dying may be of interest to students who would like to contemplate existential themes in life, as well as those who would like to consider how the treatment of death is portrayed in various cultures and across various time periods.

## How

AU's wide range of diverse courses make it easy to study this topic in depth. Courses related to Death and Dying are available in a variety of disciplines, including one's that may fit into your Degree Works. (Always check with an AU counsellor to see if these particular courses fulfill your personal graduation requirements!)

AU students interested in this topic may consider [ENGL 492: Research and Writing Projects in Literature](#), a senior-level, three-credit course, in which they "may wish to focus on a particular literary theme, idea, or theoretical problem." (Please note that [ENGL 211: Prose Forms](#) and [ENGL 212: Poetry and Plays](#), as well as two senior-level English courses and the permission of the course coordinator are required prior to enrollment). Happy reading!

*Natalia Iwanek (she/they) is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Political Science at Athabasca University.*



## ChatGPT can Help Us Realize our Dreams of a Ph.D.

**Marie Well**



What if we dreamed of getting a Ph.D. but hit a wall and balked? It's the same with anything in life: sometimes, we hit a dead end and don't know how to continue. But one solution is to ask Chat GPT.

But first, as a case study, my GPA fell short of the 3.8 required for the Ph.D. program. My supervisor thought I wasn't ready for a Ph.D. but didn't explain my options. So, I wrongly believed it was "over." And I knew a math master's student who wound up with an extremely abusive supervisor. As a result, the math student failed to get his master's degree. He was distressed when he told me that it was over. But it truly wasn't over. Not for him. Not for me. Never for you.

In my view, nothing in life is truly the dead end for us—not even death. However, everyone hits so-called dead-end walls. Life's obstacles are part of learning and growing. It takes persevering, growing, and sometimes meandering to arrive at our ultimate destination. And we're all here to love, learn, build, create, and grow. It's all part of leaving this world and everyone in it better off than before.

And yes, ChatGPT can help us to that end.

Here's an example of how ChatGPT answered my dead-end questions about pursuing a Ph.D. Thanks to ChatGPT, I finally know the answers.

I asked ChatGPT the following question: "I had too low of a GPA in my Communications master's degree to get into the Ph.D. program. My GPA was 3.58 out of 4. I needed a 3.8. What can I do to get into the Ph.D. program despite this limitation."

ChatGPT replied, "If your GPA falls below the minimum requirement for admission to a PhD program, there are still several steps you can take to improve your chances of getting accepted. Here are some suggestions:

1. Address the GPA issue in your application: Acknowledge the discrepancy in your GPA in your application materials, such as your personal statement or statement of purpose. Explain any

extenuating circumstances that may have affected your academic performance and emphasize your commitment and readiness to succeed in a PhD program.

[I developed extreme anxiety during the master's program, which impacted my ability to secure a timely thesis supervisor and write the thesis.]

2. Strengthen other aspects of your application: Highlight other strengths and achievements in your application to compensate for the lower GPA. Emphasize your research experience, publications, presentations, relevant work experience, and any additional qualifications, certifications, or skills that demonstrate your readiness for doctoral studies.

[I have gained work experience and will acquire a few certifications over the next year.]

3. Obtain relevant research experience: Engage in research activities outside of your master's program. Seek out research opportunities, internships, or assistantships related to your field of interest. This will demonstrate your research potential and dedication to academic inquiry.

[*The Voice Magazine* lists some research opportunities that I'd encourage all of us to view.]

4. Seek additional coursework or a second master's degree: Consider taking additional coursework or pursuing a second master's degree to demonstrate your academic abilities and commitment to your field. Aim to excel in these additional courses to boost your GPA and provide evidence of your capacity for advanced study.

[This struck my curiosity, although I wouldn't want to pursue more coursework in Communications. I prefer marketing.]

5. Establish strong relationships with potential advisors: Reach out to faculty members or potential advisors in the PhD programs you're interested in. Communicate your research interests, explain your situation, and express your enthusiasm for their work. Building strong relationships with faculty members who can vouch for your abilities may help compensate for a lower GPA.

[I would want to reach out to a potential supervisor in the business school for the marketing program. I'm considering the University of London's online Marketing MSc, which is \$ 20,000 Canadian. AU is another great option. I could possibly go straight into AU's Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA), given my master's degree. Unfortunately, it costs \$60,000. Most CEO's typically have master's degrees, as they are seen as more practical, according to ChatGPT. AU's DBA makes sense if we work for a big company that pays our educational tuition, if a doctorate is a dream goal, or if we're moneyed up.]

6. Improve your standardized test scores: If your GPA is a concern, achieving a high score on standardized tests such as the GRE or subject-specific exams can help offset this. Devote time to test preparation, take practice exams, and consider retaking the test if necessary to improve your scores.

[The GMAT is a great test for entry into the business school, but I likely need preparation assistance from a coaching program. The DBA and Executive MBA at AU, I believe, don't require a GMAT.]

7. Gain professional experience: If relevant to your field, gaining professional experience can be valuable. Work in a related industry or organization, and highlight any accomplishments, leadership roles, or projects that demonstrate your skills and dedication.

[Here is where age is an advantage: we may get assigned more leadership roles the more advanced in age we are.]

8. Strengthen your writing sample: Submit a strong writing sample that showcases your research abilities, critical thinking, and writing skills. Seek feedback from mentors or faculty members to ensure it is of high quality.

[Again, writing for The Voice Magazine can hone your writing skill.]

9. Consider alternative paths to a Ph.D.: If gaining admission to a traditional Ph.D. program proves challenging, explore alternative paths such as professional doctorate programs, research fellowships, or industry-sponsored Ph.D. programs. These options may have different admission requirements or provide opportunities to transition into a doctoral program.

[AU's Doctorate of Business Administration is a professional doctorate program, which involves practical knowledge as well as theoretical.]

10. Reapply in the future: If your initial application is unsuccessful, don't be discouraged. Take the time to address any weaknesses in your application and continue building your research experience and academic qualifications. Reapply in the future, demonstrating your growth and commitment to your field."

[This may be an option at AU and other universities in Canada. It may take a waiting period, the upgrading of courses, or reapplication to the same program.]

I then asked ChatGPT, "How can I fund a University of London MSc of Marketing as a Canadian student?"

It replied, "As a Canadian student, there are several options available to you to fund your MSc in Marketing at the University of London. Here are some potential sources of funding to consider:

1. Scholarships and Grants: Start by exploring scholarships and grants specifically available to international students studying in the UK. Contact the University of London's financial aid office or visit their website for information on scholarships and grants they may offer. Additionally, research external funding opportunities, such as government scholarships, private foundations, or organizations offering financial support to Canadian students studying abroad.

[The Foundation Center, renamed as Candid, may still offer the Foundation Directory Online. Simply search "disabilities" and see what funding opportunities exist.]

2. Canadian Government Funding: Check if the Canadian government or provincial governments offer any scholarships or grants for students pursuing higher education overseas. Research programs such as Global Affairs Canada's International Scholarships Program or scholarships provided by your provincial government.

3. University Funding: Inquire with the University of London about any funding programs for international students. Many universities offer funding opportunities for international students, particularly tuition fee waivers, research assistantships, or teaching assistantships.

[The University of London offers scholarships, grants, and financial aid to support international students, including students from Canada, according to ChatGPT.]

4. Student Loans: Investigate the possibility of obtaining a student loan from a Canadian bank or financial institution. Some banks offer student loans specifically designed for Canadian students studying abroad. Compare interest rates, repayment terms, and eligibility criteria to make an informed decision.

[Banks that offer student loans may require a co-signer and always require a credit check.]

5. Work and Save: Consider working part-time or full-time before starting your MSc program to save money for tuition fees and living expenses. Alternatively, depending on the visa regulations and workload, you may work part-time during your studies.

[I'd work full-time during my studies.]

6. Crowdfunding or Sponsorship: Explore crowdfunding platforms or seek sponsorship from family, friends, or local businesses who might be interested in supporting your educational pursuits."

[Crowdfunding campaigns can exist on Kickstarter, Indiegogo, GoFundMe, and Patreon. However, we must promote our campaign on social media, email, and other channels. We'd set a crowdfunding goal for the money required to achieve our educational objectives. This might be an excellent idea for people with a disability to raise funds for their education.]

I spoke in greater depth with ChatGPT, and it presented many ideas and possibilities for achieving a Ph.D. ChatGPT can be our best academic advisor. After all, it took me thirteen years to learn that I didn't have to give up on the Ph.D. dream. It was always achievable--and it is for all of us at AU. We just need the right information (and strategic effort). That's because knowledge is power, and ChatGPT offers many insights relevant to our higher education aspirations.

And on that note, there is no wall we can't overcome with knowledge and effort.



## Psychosocial Hazards

### Get Familiar with the Latest Set of Hazards at the Workplace

Alek Golijanin



Workplace hazards have historically been viewed as physical harms, inspiring the communication behind Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) labels that show up on potentially dangerous products like chemicals. But a new set of identified hazards is poised to move us away from the traditional thinking that sees hazards as being solely physical and toward a more novel way of thinking that sees hazards as having layers to them, thanks to a “psychosocial” lens.

The psychosocial approach is one that every person in the field of people management should get acquainted with because the stakes have never been higher as we transition through the most uncertain period in human history, where automation is going to change what traditional workforces look like.

#### **Psychosocial hazards in the workplace.**

The word “psychosocial” refers to the intersection and interaction of social, cultural, and environmental influences on the mind and behavior. If we use the

psychosocial lens to look at hazards, they are things that can cause stress, which can cause a person physical or psychological pain. So psychosocial hazards can come by the way of work demands, work relationships, job insecurity and organizational changes, and the overall satisfaction a person has with their job. When a workplace’s psychosocial hazards are allowed to persist, the

impact on a person can result in anxiety, fatigue, lack of motivation, depression, anger, and even post-traumatic stress disorder.

Common ways to identify psychosocial hazards include conducting company-wide surveys, reviewing injury and absence reports, and carrying out general workplace assessments. Once identified, a review of work organization, work design, working conditions and labour relations, serves as the best starting point for addressing the challenges around psychosocial hazards. The resulting remedies can be as simple as creating policies around bullying, discrimination, aggressive or violent behavior and other forms of harassment, improving organizational communication, setting out clear expectations, and allowing employees to participate in decision-making and recognizing them for their work. However, the challenge is that not all psychosocial hazards can be controlled by organizations, including the fluctuating job demands that are the result of a changing external environment, remote and isolated work that is the result of health promoting measures, and a public's negative opinion of an organization being realized by workers on the frontlines.

With the challenges that are bound to come as a byproduct of technology advancements and automation, combined with traditional challenges along the lines of organizational culture and workforce management, it is important to make the most out of all the lenses available, including the psychosocial lens, to ensure for a thriving workplace.

#### **Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant, a psychosocial hazard for basketball teammates.**

Two of the greatest sports professionals of all time, Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant, reached the pinnacle of their profession despite being what I would describe as psychosocial hazards for their teammates. For them, the only thing that mattered was winning, above everything and with no exception, and when they came across teammates who did not share their same commitment to their profession, they walked all over them. Although there is a need for leader toxicity in sports to ensure a "championship or bust" mentality, real-world workplaces will implode from that sort of tension.

When it comes to knowing people, few are better than Simon Sinek, who is famous for his philosophy on how to approach the workplace and how there will never be anything more important than people. Sinek's most famous explanation of the importance of people is his breakdown of 100% of all customers being people, 100% of all clients being people, and 100% of all employees being people, and that if you struggle to understand people then you will struggle to understand business.

The idea behind it is that humans are inherently social beings, and our survival has depended on our ability to form trusting relationships. In the end, if we want to bring out the best in someone, it is important to meet people where they are at and to work with them at their pace, because the learning curve looks different for everyone. However, a short learning curve is not always indicative of a better performer, and someone with a longer learning curve can go on to outperform those that "made it look easy", because a solid work ethic and persistence is what wins in the long game.

For those looking to further explore the idea of mental health in the workplace, the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Public Health Ottawa developed a series of short animated videos that raise awareness around thirteen different factors that can impact the mental health of employees, some of which intersect with the psychosocial lens of viewing hazards, and they are accessible through [the Mental Health Commission of Canada's website](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/en/our-work/short-animated-videos).

*Alek Golijanin is an AU alum who considers himself a gentleman first, a scholar second, and a combat sports fanatic third. In that order.*



## Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** Building Brighter Futures Awards

**Sponsored by:** Indspire

**Deadline:** August 1, 2023, 11:59 pm EST

**Potential payout:** varies by award

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be Canadian Indigenous students enrolled or attending full- or part-time studies in college, university, skilled trades, apprenticeships, or technology programs.

**What's required:** An online application form, details of which are provided after a login is set up.

**Tips:** Read the [FAQs](#) for info on the application requirements.

**Where to get info:** [indspire.ca/programs/students/bursaries-scholarships/](https://indspire.ca/programs/students/bursaries-scholarships/)



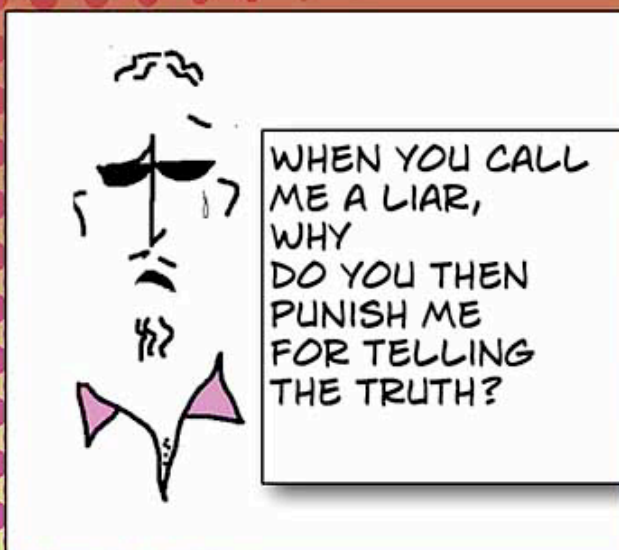
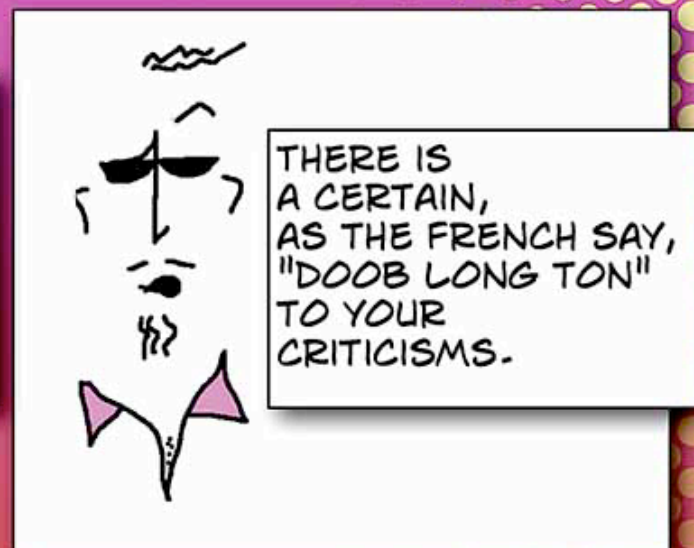
## Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of The Voice Magazine

The recent loss of the Titan submersible got us diving into our archives. We went down the rabbit hole and came up with this pair of sort-of submarine-related articles.

**He's a real nowhere man.** Lonita Fraser takes a deep dive into the groundbreaking movie *Yellow Submarine*. "*Yellow Submarine* became a vehicle not only for the Beatles' music (the Beatles themselves had little to do with the movie outside of the music contribution, not even voicing the characters), but also bridged the gap between the different

worlds of music, art, and film." [Yellow Submarine – A Revolution in film, art, and animation](#), January 21, 2004.

**But first, the music.** Lonita Fraser again, with the Beatles again. "They retired to their Abbey Road studios and produced *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an album that was so densely produced that it *couldn't* be performed live with the technology of the time." [When You've Seen Beyond Yourself](#), January 14, 2003.

**Chazz Bravado**  
Chickpocracy**Wanda Waterman**



## Congratulations, AU graduates!

The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) extends its heartfelt congratulations to the recent Athabasca University (AU) undergraduates who Convocated on Friday, June 16, 2023, online and in person in Edmonton, Alberta. We are tremendously grateful to have shared part of this momentous day with you.

You have worked tirelessly to reach this milestone, and the entire AU community joins us in recognizing your hard work, determination, and dedication. We want to remind you that your AU degree is not only a testament to your academic excellence but also a symbol of the possibilities that await you.

Once again, congratulations on this extraordinary achievement, and thank you for allowing AUSU to be part of your Convocation ceremony. We wish you all the very best in your future endeavours, and we look forward to seeing your continued growth in the years to come!



*Congratulations, AU Graduates!*

## Thank you for participating in our 3rd annual Pride Month at AUSU events!

On behalf of the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU), we would like to thank everyone from Athabasca University (AU) who attended and made our 3rd annual [Pride Month at AUSU](#) events a huge success. We are proud to have had the opportunity to celebrate the diversity, inclusiveness, and affirmation of 2SLGBTQIA+ students at AU.

*Pride Month at AUSU* provides a safe and welcoming space where diverse voices can be heard and celebrated. The participation of everyone who attended our events was inspiring, and we are grateful for their contributions towards creating an atmosphere where everyone feels respected and valued.

We firmly believe that creating a sense of belonging is essential to our mission of promoting the success and well-being of AU community members. Learn more about the advocacy work AUSU is doing for 2SLGBTQIA+ students [here](#). We recognize that queer students face unique challenges in their academic journey, and we are committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where all students can reach their full potential.

The outstanding participation from AU undergraduates during *Pride Month at AUSU* shows that the AU community values diversity and acceptance. We look forward to doing it again next June 2024, and we hope that even more of you will join us in celebrating queer Pride!

Thank you again for your participation, and we look forward to continuing our year-round support for 2SLGBTQIA+ students at AU.



[ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org)

Please send the Athabasca University Students' Union your valuable feedback and suggestions regarding our student services. We are committed to providing quality resources for AU undergraduates and we look forward to hearing from you!

Follow us on social media!  
We are @AUSStudentsUnion



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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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[www.voicemagazine.org](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

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