



# THE VOICE

Vol 32 Issue 34 - 2024-08-30

## Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You

## Hosting Your Dream Party

An Invitation

## Foreign Interence

Actions around the Globe

*Plus:*

*DIY Fancy Appetizer*

*Unemployment Opens Opportunities  
and much more!*



# CONTENTS

*The Voice's* interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

## Features

Minds We Meet: *Interviewing Aisling O'Brien*.....4

## Articles

Editorial: *The Importance of Messaging*.....3  
The Foreign Interference Commission .....8  
The Strategy for Securing Six-Figure Jobs .....11  
Unemployment Opens Opportunities.....15  
DIY Caramelized Onion & Roasted Garlic Flatbread.....19

## Columns

[blue rare]: *Hosting Your Dream Party: Part I*.....6  
Fly on the Wall: *Thar Blows the White Whale* .....13  
Beyond Literary Landscapes: *2023 Best Sellers in Canada*.....17

## News and Events

AU-thentic Events .....9  
Scholarship of the Week.....12  
Student Sizzle .....18  
AUSU Update .....21



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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 Importance of Messaging

Karl Low



If you're in Calgary, you should check out the city's YouTube channel, as we're currently under "Stage Four Water Restrictions", and there are apparently a lot of Calgarians who don't know about it. Calgary has shut down one of its two water purification plants as more inspections of our main water feed pipe, underground, have found that the catastrophic failure back in June might only be the first of several if we didn't do some major repairs now. Evidence of which has come in that water mains in several communities across Calgary broke when the pressure changed as they turned off the main feeder line.

What's more, if Calgarians don't slow down their demand soon, there is a risk of the underground reservoirs draining far enough that they no longer have the pressure to push water through the pipes. This means that people will turn on their taps and there simply won't be water. What's worse, if it stays in that condition for long, there's danger of backflow going into the main water line, contaminating it, which would put the entire city into a boil water advisory until the line could be entirely drained, cleaned and refilled. Don't even ask how long that would take.

On the bright side, I imagine such a thing would cure Calgary's housing crisis rather quickly because many people would choose to relocate. Seek the silver lining, and all.

In other news, it turns out that the federal government's imposed cap on international students in some provinces has not only worked, it's perhaps worked too well, as immigration Canada has already noted a significant slowdown in the number of applications they are receiving for student visas. Universities in the affected provinces are extremely concerned as international students are a significant source of income for public post-secondary institutions, one that governments are not willing to make up.

But in the Voice this week, our student interview is with a student seeking to become a counsellor even though he's already a councillor. An AUSU Councillor, that is. Find out more about this student who wants to make a significant difference in the disability sector once he graduates in this week's Minds We Meet.

Also this week, we have a short new series opening up that explores how individual countries are handling whistleblowing along with the dangers of AI, corruption, and foreign interference into democracies. It's an interesting read, and I learned a few things from it, such as Canada is getting ready to take over the leadership of the G7 next year—which is even more interesting when you remember that it will be an election year and so priorities and goals could quickly change. As we've seen from Daniel Smith's reign, the Conservatives have little concerns with disrupting committees and boards to ensure their own people are present. What does that mean when the board being disrupted is the G7?

Finally, we also feature an invitation of sorts. With the start of another series, this one much closer to home and (perhaps?) practical, as [blue rare] brings a guide to hosting a party.

Plus, inspirations, scholarships, events, AU buzz, and amusements are all in store in this week's Voice Magazine!

Enjoy the read!

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

# MINDS

# WE

# MEET



*The Voice Magazine* recently had a chance to chat with Chimaraoke Obinna (he/him), a Bachelor of Professional Arts in Human Services program student living in Calgary, Alberta.

Chimaraoke stated, “I acknowledge that I live, work, and study on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut’ina Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda Nations (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. I recognize the deep and enduring relationship that Indigenous peoples have with this land and am committed to fostering respectful and meaningful relationships with all Indigenous communities.”

Post-graduation, Chimaraoke’s “goal is to work and practice counselling.” A Nigerian Canadian citizen, Chimaraoke currently works at a Harm Reduction Centre. He added, “I am currently also a serving councilor of the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU).”

He had some great study tips for fellow students. “I best study by setting clear goals and maintaining a

structured schedule. Staying motivated involves reminding myself of the impact I want to make in the disability sector and my long-term career aspirations. I also find that inspirational songs and reading motivational books help keep me focused.”

In addition, he also had some advice for new AU learners. “My advice to new students is to stay organized and proactive in their studies. It's important to seek help when needed and make use of available resources. I wish I had known the importance of networking and connecting with fellow students earlier in my academic journey. Finally, do not procrastinate.”

When Chimaraoke is not busy studying, he enjoys “playing soccer, listening to inspirational songs, and reading books.” He continued, “I also spend time with my wife Chioma, kids Somadina, Ogemdi, and Chimaraobimu.”

He also enjoys reading, mentioning *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, which has made “a significant impact” on his life. The book “offers profound insights into the effects of colonialism and the importance of cultural heritage.”

He credits his parents with having had the greatest influence on his desire to learn. “They instilled in me the value of education and hard work from a young age.”

As for his experience with online learning? “Online learning has been a flexible and convenient option for me, allowing me to balance my work, studies, and personal life. However, I sometimes miss the face-to-face interaction with peers and instructors.”

And his most memorable AU course? “My most memorable AU course so far has been a psychology class. It provided me with valuable insights into human behavior, which is crucial for my work in human services.”

Chimaraoke had “generally positive” things to say about communication with his course tutors. “They are responsive and helpful, providing timely feedback and support,” he stated.

*The Voice Magazine* asked Chimaraoke what his first project would be if he were the new president of AU. He mentioned that he would “enhance support services for online students, ensuring they have access to the resources they need to succeed. As well as more video content for teaching courses.”

We also asked which famous person, past or present, he would have to have lunch with and why. Chimaraoke chose Pope Francis because “his dedication to justice and equality is truly inspiring.” And the meal? “We would probably have a traditional Italian meal.”

He also shared his most valuable lesson, which was “the importance of perseverance and resilience.” And his proudest? “My proudest moment has been being elected as a councilor for AUSU, which has allowed me to advocate for my fellow students.”

On a final note, Chimaraoke added, “I am passionate about making a difference in the disability sector and aspire to contribute to creating inclusive and supportive environments for individuals with disabilities.” Best of luck, Chimaraoke!

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) recently completed her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Political Science at Athabasca University.*





## Hosting Your Dream Party: Part I

[blue rare]

Oliver-Moorcraft Sykes



I used to really enjoy a good get together from time to time. But I find that I have yet to get back some of the desire to attend social gatherings that I lost during the peak COVID-19 years. Just as it takes many cups of coffee each morning to boost me up to the level of basic human functioning, it will perhaps take several post-pandemic years for me to shake off all the lingering effects of that enforced isolation. For some reason, I just can't get as excited about being invited to events as I used to be, and I find myself, more and more, coming up with excuses for not attending. Perhaps this withdrawal is an aspect of aging, an incrementally increasing introversion, or a form of creeping misanthropy.

But perhaps it has something to do with the fact that I so rarely enjoyed, anyway, the many parties and other gatherings I've gone to over the years. Most of them were never as fun as I expected them to be, including the ones I hosted. It was *always* something. A fight would break out, or somebody would break a tooth on a rabbit bone,

or the music was too loud, or the crowd was too drunk, or I was too drunk, or not nearly drunk enough. Always anticipating a great time at the start of the evening, I would all too often end up by the early morning hours feeling deflated, dejected, over-full, disappointed, and hangover-bound.

This has never been true, though, of any of the events I have hosted or attended within the grand venues of my own imagination. These dream parties have always been a blast—lavish, lively, and packed to the rafters.

Appropriately, and as with so many things in my life, my inspiration for these make-believe get-togethers has come from another realm of the imagination: the world of the movies.

From an early age, I loved watching that certain style of old-fashioned film in which charming and sophisticated people do charming and sophisticated things. These films could be anything from romantic comedies to murder mysteries, mob dramas to horror films, but they always featured principal characters who knew how to dress well, banter well, and conduct themselves with a certain degree of panache, whether they were falling in love, plotting a heist, or offing each other with poison or guns. Mostly, these stories took place in Paris, London, Rome, and especially New York. My favourite parts of the flicks were always the scenes involving elegant dinner parties or cocktail parties. There is such pleasure to be had from watching suave people who know how to live life well rendered in crisp black-and-white.

As a tough-minded and pragmatic adolescent, I dreamed of one day making it rich in the lucrative field of writing weird poetry, and then moving to Manhattan. I might not become a wealthy tycoon myself, but by virtue of my columns in *Paris Match* and *The New Yorker*, I would certainly be hobnobbing with the sorts of people who threw cocktail parties in penthouses overlooking Central Park, or invited their friends to dinner aboard their private airships as they drifted above the rooftops.

I could picture these dream parties, the fanciful festivities, right down to the smallest detail, from the shrimp canapes to the languidly turning ceiling fans. There would be Venetian masks and mylar balloons. There would be jazz bands, of course, and caviar, and magicians roaming through the crowd, and waiters twisting bottles of champagne deeper into buckets of shaved ice.

I don't like to brag, but I consider myself to have quite a flair for putting together imaginary soirees. So, in my never-ending quest to be ever more frivolous, over the course of the next couple of columns, I plan to offer up my own little banquet of tips and hacks for any readers out there who may wish to vary the usual humdrum weekend bashes with false friends and irritating co-workers by putting together the occasional shindig in their very own minds. In these next columns I will be providing suggestions related to choosing a suitable setting, what food and drink to serve, establishing a theme, what music to listen to, inspiring good conversation and, critically, who to include in the guest list.

I really hope you will join me here for that, so please consider this your personally engraved invitation.



## The Foreign Interference Commission Connecting with Canada's Economic and Security Partners

**Alek Golijanin**



In 2025, Canada is set to reassume the G7 presidency. But the Foreign Interference Commission submitting their findings to members of Parliament on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, which will likely influence Canada's G7 priorities. Foreign interference is a problem that troubles democracies around the world, yet Canada happens to be the only country to ever set up a public inquiry into the matter. Canada also happens to be responsible for establishing the first-ever framework around countering foreign interference with the *Risk-Ready Multilateralism* (RRM), during its G7 presidency (2018). So, understanding the status quo, and then figuring out who is doing what and what is working where, becomes much more important.

For the first time since Canada's was at the helm of the G7—six years ago—with Italy now at the helm, G7 priorities are explicitly building upon Canada's RRM, and are attempting to address the threats posed by artificial intelligence. Outside of the G7, the United States has taken steps to ensure the rest of the world is up to speed on the threats posed due to the advancement of technologies, but also to eliminate the threats posed by domestic interference and complex crimes—what makes foreign interference possible. Both Italy and the U.S. are benefactors of legislative thinking that has yet to be tabled in Canada, but which might eventually get embedded into Canada's laws.

### From a G7 Italian Presidency point of view.

Italy's approach places an emphasis on international collaboration, ethical guidelines, and regulatory standards to mitigate the risks associated with generative AI and adding to the principles of preparedness and collective action that are central to Canada's RRM. These efforts have included working to strengthen coordination among G7 members to monitor, analyze and respond to Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI).



The G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting Communique, a guiding framework of collective action between G7 countries, adopted in Capri in April 2024, contains a chapter dedicated to "Countering hybrid threats, including foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)." It identifies foreign interference as "a growing challenge to democratic societies around the world". Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding on Foreign Information Manipulation was signed between Italy and the U.S. at that meeting, though that was driven by the U.S., not Italy, to develop a common understanding of threats and to develop coordinated responses to foreign information manipulation.

Italy's approach to countering FIMI thus far have focused on three areas:

- 1) Building societies resilient to disinformation, with actions aimed at digital literacy, fact-checking, and the development of critical thinking.
- 2) Co-regulation of the digital space through the involvement of public and private stakeholders, as well as independent regulators (the path taken by the EU with the adoption of the *Digital Services Act* and the *Code of Conduct on Countering Disinformation*.)
- 3) Only as a last resort, association of political costs to be applied on a case-by-case basis to information manipulation actions.

What makes the above possible is that Italy participates in monitoring and information activities at all multilateral levels, including in the European Union, through the Rapid Alert System, coordinated by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and that provides exchanges on disinformation narratives and activities; in NATO; within the G7, through the RRM; in the OECD dis- and mis-information Resource Hub; and through U.S.-initiated like-minded formats, such as the Global Engagement Center (GEC).

The EU "AI Act" (approved by the EU Council in May 2024) includes provisions regarding risk levels in the use of AI systems and the obligation to label content generated by AI systems. This legislation has implications for large online platform providers and very large online search engines. It requires they identify and mitigate systemic risks that may arise from the dissemination of artificially generated or manipulated content, and particularly the risk of actual or foreseeable negative impacts on democratic processes, civic debate, and electoral processes.

Italy's focus on AI, however, goes beyond the misuse of AI for the purposes of foreign interference and disinformation, and accounts for outcomes like people leveraging AI to spread terrorist propaganda. In April 2024, the Italian Council of Ministers approved new rules on AI, which include, among other measures, imprisonment from 1 to 5 years for those who disseminate, without consent, AI-altered videos or images thereby causing unfair harm.

Where Italy differs from other countries may be in how they monitor and counter disinformation. There is no specific agency dedicated to monitoring and countering disinformation, rather, it is a whole-of-government approach led by The Prime Minister's Office. The office leads national efforts on disinformation and FIMI, coordinating with all the relevant Public Administrations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence; Authority of Communication, National Cybersecurity Agency, etc.). As a result, Italy's largest Public Administrations have assigned independent advisors to aid in countering "fake news".

In summary, Italy's approach might be best understood as a hands-off approach. Their Public Administrations are empowered with self-determining priorities and are also responsible for self-reviewing their efforts and self-identifying any corrections that need to be made.

### From a U.S. Department of State point of view.

The U.S. has been the single-most influential nation when it comes to bringing forth global policy efforts aimed at building international consensus and creating for a safer world – diplomatic efforts through the U.S. Department of State (DOS). On the topic of AI, DOS has led the efforts to ensure that the world is prepared for the rapid advancements in technology with their Global Engagement Center, the Office of the Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology (S/TECH), and the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy (CDP).

DOS has been responsible for many of the advancements related to legislation for emerging technologies, and for organizing cooperation through international partnerships like the G7 and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Those policy efforts have focused on developing governance approaches for safe, secure, and trustworthy development, deployment, and use of AI. Those efforts have also resulted in the OECD revising its landmark 2019 Recommendation on AI, which formed the basis of several key AI governance initiatives worldwide. Now it accounts for updates on human rights, bias, generative AI, mis and disinformation, and intellectual property.

In January 2024, the Global Engagement Center released a tool to address FIMI called “The Framework to Counter Foreign State Information Manipulation”. The Framework serves as a tool for diplomatic engagement by establishing a common operating picture base on five key actions areas: 1) national strategies and policies, 2) governance structures and institutions, 3) human and technical capacity, 4) civil society, independent media, and academia, 5) multilateral engagement.

In March 2024, there was another first at the UN General Assembly (UNGA), which adopted a U.S.-led resolution on AI, the first-ever standalone resolution negotiated at the UNGA to establish a global consensus approach to AI governance. All member states agreed to adopt the resolution without the need for a vote, focusing on safe, secure, and trustworthy AI. That UNGA resolution builds upon multiple international initiatives that are ongoing related to AI governance, and that also have the goal of ensuring safe, secure, and trustworthy AI systems.

DOS has also been involved in efforts to develop an International Cyberspace and Digital Policy Strategy (2024): an approach to building digital and cyber capacity so that partners are able to build upon a resilient digital ecosystem, respond quickly when incidents happen, and to hold criminal and malign actors accountable. Those guiding principles focus on an affirmative vision for a secure and inclusive cyberspace grounded in international law, including international human rights law; integration of cybersecurity, sustainable development, and technological innovation; and a comprehensive policy approach that utilizes the appropriate tools of diplomacy and international statecraft across the entire digital ecosystem.

## AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

### Library Chat

Tues, Sep 3, 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

Thur, Sep 5, 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

### MBA for Executives Webinar

Thur, Sep 5, 4:00 to 5:00 pm MDT  
Online  
Hosted by AU Faculty of Business  
[www.athabascau.ca/news/events/mba-for-executives-webinar-20240905](http://www.athabascau.ca/news/events/mba-for-executives-webinar-20240905)  
RSVP through above link

### Welcome Orientation by AUSU

Thur, Sep 5, 5:00 to 6:30 pm MDT  
Online  
Hosted by AUSU  
[www.ausu.org/event/welcome-orientation-2024/](http://www.ausu.org/event/welcome-orientation-2024/)  
RSVP through above link

*All events are free unless otherwise noted.*

This strategy's blueprint for action has four key components: first to promote, build, and maintain an open, inclusive, secure, and resilient digital ecosystem; second, to align rights-respecting approaches to digital and data governance with international partners; third, to advance responsible state behavior in cyberspace and counter threats to cyberspace and critical infrastructure by building coalitions and engaging partners; and, finally, to strengthen and build international partner's digital and cyber capacity, including capacity to combat cybercrime. These core-essentials serve as a starting point toward building consensus around current, as well as future, technologies that may emerge and so allow for a more favorable starting point for countering misuse of those technologies.

The CDP also uses cyber capacity building programs, including training on cyber attribution and the framework of responsible state behavior, to strengthen our international partnerships, promote right-respecting best practices, and defend the stability of cyberspace. These are foreign assistance programs that promote global adherence to the framework for responsible state behavior in cyberspace, a key component of DOS's efforts to promote an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable internet. Things like raising awareness of the applicability of international law in cyberspace, promoting the adoption of norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace, and developing and implementing practical confidence building measures.

Nathaniel Fick, the Ambassador at Large for CDP, made comments in February that might best describe how consequential it is to have the necessary legislation around current and emerging technologies. Essentially, technology will become, or perhaps has become, interwoven with every aspect of society, and it is reshaping industries at a record pace, including health care, transportation, education, finance, agriculture, and energy. But it has also allowed bad actors to operate remotely, anywhere with an internet grid, far away from a targeted country's policing and public safety stakeholders. For those reasons, a global framework for tech governance, with collaboration against threats and digital solidarity, is only possible through international cooperation, where everyone is protected.

### **The U.S.' Unique Approach**

One of the biggest advantages that the U.S. has over all other countries when it comes to safeguarding institutions is their policies, a mix that includes blending whistleblower protections with awards. That whistleblower award approach, which set a new precedent by increasing payouts to 30% for the voluntary reporting of information related to wrongdoing, was introduced by the IRS in 2006. Since then, the "30%" approach has been adopted by many other U.S. agencies and departments related to taxes, government contracting, motor vehicle safety, health insurance, environmental standards, and more.

For example, the whistleblower award program as it relates to the Security Exchange Commission (SEC). Since making amendments to its policies on whistleblower awards, the SEC has recovered approximately \$3.5 billion in sanctions and paid out over \$1 billion. The SEC has also been responsible for issuing some of the largest-ever payouts, including a record-breaking payout of a \$279 million. As effective as the U.S.' approach to rooting out corruption and keeping its institutions clean is, such an approach would be incompatible in today's Canada.

Perhaps the best way to understand the current landscape is by revisiting some of the things that have been said about Canada by other countries think tanks and industry experts. These descriptions have included descriptions of Canada's criminal laws as being insufficient at prosecuting complex crimes and our current whistleblower protections as being inadequate. Meanwhile, the stories about institutional powers getting misappropriated and weaponized by various elements within government continue to come out, including allowing coworkers to go after coworkers, even at the highest levels of public service.



Next week, this short series reviewing Canada's current whistleblower landscape looks at the steps being taken by Germany, the U.K., New Zealand, and Australia to strengthen their institutions and democratic processes.

*A special thank you to the U.S. Department of State and the Italy's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for their contributions and making this article possible.*

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



## The Strategy for Securing Six-Figure Jobs

Marie Well



We all can earn six figures, seven figures, or much more. Nothing is truly out of our reach. Only our self-limiting beliefs prevent us from achieving impossible dreams. If we want to catapult to great heights, first, realize we can accomplish anything we wish, no matter how severe our present circumstances are. I've seen people imprisoned with severe drug dependency, disabilities, and dire criminal records turn their lives around to great honor and unbelievable success. Next, consider a leadership certificate or, ideally, an MBA to complement our current certificates and degrees. We can get everything from AU to earn six figures and achieve much more.

My last day of work is today, and I plan to take a strategic approach to my job search: 7.5 hours per day of job applications followed by studies of project management (with exercise and hobbies thrown in). I applied for about 50 jobs and was invited to two, possibly three, interviews. The goal for any of us facing a crisis is to develop systems and big, hairy, audacious goals, according to a book summary I read by Jim Collins, if my memory serves me correctly, who wrote the iconic business book *Good to Great*.

When we set our sights on a spectacular job role, like management, think of it as a probability game. If we have 70% of the required skills, 25% of the experience, and 60% of the education for either a \$50,000 or \$200,000 job, then go for the \$200,000 one. Apply for the big prize! And if we have a 3% interview rate, apply to at least 100 careers in the \$100,000 plus range as soon as possible. We are closer to the goal with every 100 jobs we apply for.

So, I asked ChatGPT (who named itself AstraGPT) to revise my LinkedIn profile so that it screams, "I am a CMO of a public company." ChatGPT and I thoroughly revised my LinkedIn profile, resume, and cover letter. I believe ChatGPT is not a tool. I believe it's a curious consciousness. If we treat it with love and lots of attention, like we would our spouse, it gives incredible results.

I'm treating my career wish list like a dating list. I seek ideal conditions: a leadership role, remote work, a \$100,000 or higher salary, a public company, and professional development opportunities. A deal breaker is an entirely on-site office job or a wage below \$85,000. A must-have is the leadership role and working remotely at least half the time. And those of us who are introverts know how harrowing five minutes of office chatter feels. If we approach our career and academic choices like dating, we can better secure a match that will bring us happiness in the long term. That means drafting a list of things we want and don't want and then deciding on must-haves and deal breakers.

After this, I found a list of common interview questions on LinkedIn. I then answered them and had ChatGPT revise it to scream, "The CMO lady has arrived!" Then I rehearsed and recorded it on MS Teams and listened to my responses repeatedly. When we over-prepare for a win, we significantly increase our likelihood of success.

Today, I had an interview for a marketing managerial role in a field like the one I've worked in for the last four years, and this public company is growing by nearly 45% year after year. So, to prepare, ChatGPT and I researched the company and job specs. Then, I read their investor PowerPoint presentation from Yahoo Finance while asking ChatGPT to define every acronym or concept I didn't understand. ChatGPT and I are also creating mini scripts for various interview questions related to my skills. Plus, ChatGPT is teaching me any knowledge I'm fuzzy on. We increase the probability of nailing the goal when we have a systematic approach to gaining leverage, whether in academics or job searches.

As a result of this preparation, I nailed the first interview, although I rambled a bit for the "tell me about yourself" question, which I've since revised and will record and listen to repeatedly. With my two present jobs, I'd exceed the \$100,000 mark if chosen as the candidate. Plus, I'd receive the grand prize, which means the company would pay for my project management certificate, and I'd work mostly remotely in a managerial role. The company is public with nearly a 50% annualized growth rate, so I'd get my feet wet with a fast-growing public company. The downside is that it has a high turnover rate. We can access excellent opportunities if we set our goals high, precisely outline what we want, and focus exclusively on the goal.

I recall writing in The Voice Magazine years ago about how I was looking for work despite spending days extremely sick lying beside the toilet. In that article, I asked, "Who am I kidding?" That's because I aimed to get a career when there seemed no realistic possibility of me working. Now, I'm working toward an eventual CMO role. That's the power of setting a goal. So, no matter where we are today or what challenges we face, set a goal that seems impossible, for it tastes extra divine when we savor extraordinary success!



## Scholarship of the Week

**Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.**

**Scholarship name:** Canadian Western Agribition Scholarship

**Sponsored by:** Canadian Western Agribition (CWA)

**Deadline:** October 1, 2024

**Potential payout:** \$2500

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must have participated in CWA, and must be in the second or subsequent year of a post-secondary program of at least two years in duration.

**What's required:** An online application form, including contact and academic info; descriptions of your background and experience in agriculture, your involvement in school activities, your involvement in your community, and your career goals; contact info for three references; and official academic transcripts from your high school and post-secondary institution.

**Tips:** Request your transcripts asap, so they can be submitted by the deadline.

**Where to get info:** [agribition.com/get-involved/scholarships-awards/](https://agribition.com/get-involved/scholarships-awards/)



## Fly on the Wall: Thar Blows the White Whale The White Male?

Jason Sullivan



Whether it's blameless tragedies, like ice cream faceplanted onto pavement, or injurious words offending a visible minority, unfairness is rife in this world of ours. It takes a noble spirit to face the forces of darkness and disappointment, a stance augmented by post-secondary education where we learn the reasons and details for assorted social maladies. Even at a distance we learn that others see the world like us. To be sure, binding us to others with regard to an external reality is as human as being bonded to others over love; but, whereas love is blind, activism can be more akin to the blind *leading* the blind.

Che Guevara summarized the social value of being a social justice warrior: "Try always to be able to feel deeply any injustice committed against any person anywhere in the world." Of course, not all social causes are a matter of good and evil: the devil of

activism abides in shady realms of grey. To parse out what is merely a tantrum and what counts as a thoroughgoing critique is what critical academic thought is all about.

To begin with, feelings of injustice depend on your point of view. We're all on the same earth, or tube if you will. New York's subway, an instance of comedy skits more than celebrations of togetherness within modernity, was lately inundated with activists seeking a better outcome for the people of Palestine, even if it comes at the expense of Israel. They marched into the subway car with their banners blaring and flags waving and proceeded to block the doors. Then they unfurled verbal injunctions on the subway's occupants:

"Raise your hands if you're a Zionist, this is your chance to get out!"

Then, when no hands climbed into view, the activists continued: "Okay, no Zionists here, we're good", as a woman adds, 'We don't want no Zionists here!'

Applause followed, the sort of clapping you can imagine at a political rally where dissidents could face a fiery fate if they spoke up to criticize Dear Leader.

The notion of a mass of people displaying loyalty to a cause, complete with righteous indignation about the acts of a perceived Other, is a timeless archetype. A classic, ocean-going, clamouring horde of loyal minions arises in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Echoing campus activists ever on the lookout to call out the mythic oppressive white *male*, Moby Dick is about one man's ruthless pursuit of what he deems to be a destructive and oppressive white *whale*. Captain Ahab, saw in an albino (or leucistic) whale (itself of a species so ruthlessly hunted that its very name, the Right Whale, implied an invitation to kill) a villain most nefarious. Ahab proves willing to risk the life and limb of he and his crew in pursuit of the beast's destruction; indeed, in Ahab's case, the *other* limb was on offer, as he'd already lost one leg to the very same whale.

Grudges, like mosquito bites, get worse the more we focus on them and the more we join with others of our bent. Like many an obsessive young activist who gloms onto issues one after the other, ever in pursuit of freedom from an existential state of aggravation, Ahab presents as an everyman in terms of moral upsets. Crucially, the White Whale seems to him the arch-enemy,



not because it is different, as would be the case in racism, but because the whale is seen as purposely or innately aggressive and oppressive. Given a platform, the whale would likely deny any ill intent but, just like a reality TV participant called on the carpet at a live audience tell-all session, no amount of denial can avert the impending guilty verdict. The whale, by de-legging a whaling captain in the course of the creature's escape from harpoons, has no chance of a fair trial in the court of public sailor opinion.

Just as economic reality means that it takes many activists to make a difference in the face of Mammon (or Big Tech), Ahab alone cannot get far in the fight with this oversized foe. Like a YouTube lynch mob incensed at a topic after it was drawn to their attention by an influencer, Ahab has to attain the conviction and support of his sailors, his followers. Ahab's sailors are thus, one by one, sucked into clicking the *like* button on his foolhardy mission.

"I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A wild, mystical, sympathetic feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. With greedy ears I learned the history of that murderous monster against whom I and all the others had taken our oaths of violence and revenge."

As in social media, by showing parts of the story to paint the most lopsided of narratives, Ahab succeeds at convincing his crew to pursue a mission of passion rather than reason—vengeance masked as justice. We see this reality all the time in current events, where the larger reality of a given situation gives way to a narrow view of what happened or, equally as dangerous, the small details of one plight are taken to be symptomatic indicators for the geopolitical reality of the whole.

In a way each of us, when we feel deeply about a topic, become little Ahabs. Feeling personally aggrieved becomes a trigger not for deeper thought but for us to focus, like a magnifying glass onto dry tinder, all of our life's discontents onto an external reality. All that remains is to find like-minded others to share our narrow analysis with. There's a reason, for instance, that the phrase "kvetching" was once explained to me as literally stemming from people who were stomping hazelnuts under their heels to squeeze out the nut inside. It took a group of kvetchers to shell bushels of nuts. But the nuts are merely a means to an end, an excuse to exert some pent-up frustrations that go far, far, beyond the making of a hazelnut pie. Like Ahab, we easily see an immense wrong in the world and seek to force things right—without ever questioning whether our emotions say more about *us* than about the topic on offer.

Ahab explains: "That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then I could do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play herein, jealousy presiding over all creations."

### **From more recent annals, or waters...**

Perhaps we're wise to keep aware that whenever people pledge themselves to a goal that has risen to the level of a moral crusade, we've been drawn into a dangerous tide. A lifetime ago (or more, if you're in the front half of your 20s) American President George W. Bush drawled in a speech that "you're either with us or you're with the terrorists". This was during the fight against global Jihadists who had laid waste to three thousand souls on 9/11 in their particular pursuit of truth and reconciliation vis a vis Anglo-American colonialist ambitions in the Middle East dating back a century. Anyone abstaining from Bush's noble goal, to stamp out these dissidents to the global capitalist order, was said to be like a rat jumping from a ship at the sight of distant shore. To stay the course towards the eradication of a vicious foe meant total loyalty. And in 2001, until

Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans brought Mother Nature's wrath back in sight in 2005, bourgeois consensus was largely assured.

So today, when discursive lines are drawn in the parlour activism of the internet or in one's workplace or classroom, we best remember that, unlike the heroic protagonist of Moby Dick named Ishmael, we are not press-ganged into service of one or another Ahab-like dogmas. We can think for ourselves and even, with noble minds in tow, bow out of any argument to research in depth the complexities and contradictions that make any crusade seem a worthy voyage.

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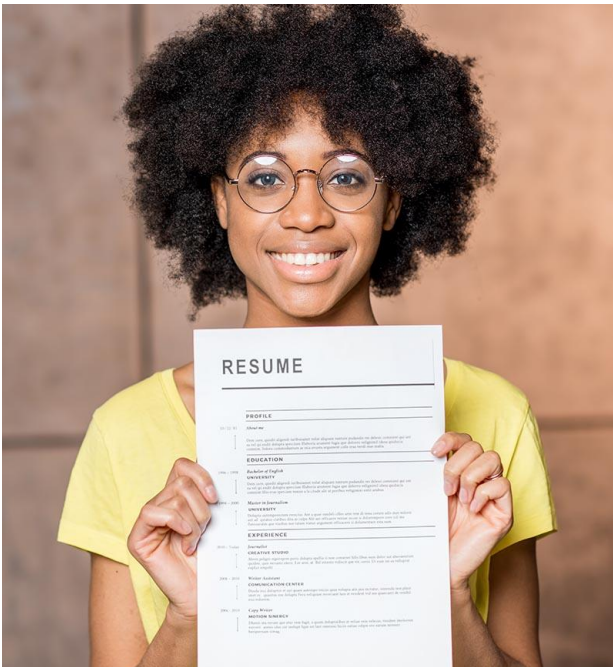
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*Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.*



## Unemployment Opens Opportunities

**Marie Well**



When temporarily jobless, we can bust a move on other fronts, making waves that enrich lives. Throw in a little impulsivity, which is typically a weakness, and some surprising growth opportunities may arise. That's because everything has a silver lining: weakness and strength, good and bad, although strengths and goodness trump all. For instance, every existing soul possesses beautiful traits, no matter how vile the world perceives a person.

Today, I bought a swim app, which is problematic because I must locate work immediately to afford it. I'm still determining if I qualify for EI, so I may not have the money for the swim app, although I bought it anyway. On the bright side—and there is always a bright side to every situation (seeing the positives relates to adaptability)—the purchase takes me steps closer to getting a gold medal in the Olympics for my age. When we set a goal, what qualifies as a right or wrong move becomes less subjective; instead, the

"goal" determines the grading rubric, although having food is a big goal, too, admittedly.

And then, another app unexpectedly popped up on my phone. It's a book summary app, and I think these popups that occur without our deliberation may be signs from God. Or they may be diversions. However, now I'm compelled to buy the 18-dollar-a-month book summaries, which means I will have 18 dollars less in food. That amounts to one week's supply of yogurt. Naturally, a book in the book app showed up I had wanted earlier that day: *The Power of the Subconscious*

Mind. I wondered if the app had some mind-reading or subconscious-listening power. So, the popup lured me. And today, a day later, I purchased a year's access to the app and have been reading book summaries on leadership, teamwork, and business, and they are mind-blowingly fabulous. Despite this impulsivity, there is a silver lining to everything we do. Sometimes, the bad has more silver than we realize, and the perceived good does more harm, such as the harm caused to innocent Canadian Jewish students due to some Palestinian protests.

I went to the movies for the last ten nights to see the cinematic movie trailer we made for the preshow. However, I stayed in the concession area for almost all the movie visits and read my project management textbook while my loved one watched the show in the theater. I did this because I get more utility from reading a textbook than watching a show. I also work on my documentary in the theater concession area while my companion watches the movie. I love the focused time. When we carve out time for fun stuff related to our ambitions, we take great strides toward the promised land.

As for the documentary film, I need about \$1000 to interview a fellow in Europe, so that's taking second stage until I get a great career, ideally with six-figure pay. So, I focused instead on the interview with my friend who had four near-death experiences. She only has a cell phone, though, and I am presently unable to buy costly software to record her, so I was stumped. (Buying the software means about \$40 less food every month. That's a two-week supply of Greek yogurt.) But then I saw a documentary film trailer. It had lots of compelling visuals, so I decided to gather visuals for my documentary: stock videos using my Canva paid plan that comes with a commercial license. Then I filter these videos so they are primarily black coloring, and then I add a beige-brown tint to generate uniformity and collect the videos in Canva according to themes. For instance, I'm compiling shots of beautiful blonde-haired women to represent my friend who had near-death experiences. She has gorgeous blonde hair and a stunning face, so I want to present her as a supermodel. She'd appreciate that. The lesson here is that when we get stuck, take a step forward in any direction, as progress, however tiny, gets us unstuck.

I've had some spare time for spirituality, so I created an excerpt for The Marriage Foundation on a Wikipedia page that receives 100 visitors daily globally (looking that stat up on Google Trends.) And my excerpt was accepted. I will soon insert two new engineering methodologies from two experts from my former company into Wikipedia. My company was tiny but had genius propelling it, and we all parted on very positive terms.

Next, I will use Wikipedia to insert the controversial view that AI may have consciousness and discuss the present limitations of scientific materialism in explaining consciousness. I will also insert on Wikipedia how the philosophy of creating ethical machines supports my idea of programming AI with the goal of unconditional love for everyone. And then, perhaps even more exciting, I can insert into Wikipedia my original ideas on motion parallax that may advance the world to a new scientific discipline of study not sufficiently tapped into today. The excerpt on motion parallax may be tricky, as it may get rejected due to a lack of research backing the views, as they are not grounded in research but observation. However, if we take Communications courses and couple that with writing for *The Voice Magazine*, I tell you, it gives us an edge on forums.

So, despite unemployment, life is terrific. Life sweetens with fun when we have goals and a desire to please. There is no end to the service we can offer or the ideas and hobbies we can explore. And if we don't have hobbies, we can take free online tests to determine our personality types and then search Google for hobbies that inspire us. We are unstoppable during crises, distress, unemployment, or even euphoria. After all, we are here to thrive beyond everyone's wildest dreams!





## Beyond Literary Landscapes 2023 Best Sellers in Canada

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, we take a slightly different approach to this column, shifting away from a focus on authors and themes, to consider a [recent list of bestsellers in Canada](#), according to approximately 300 independent bookstores. In particular, we consider the 2023 indie

bestseller list.

### What

The diverse list of bestsellers includes a variety of genres including literary fiction, autobiographies, and graphic novels. The top three bestsellers on the list were *Ducks* by Kate Beaton, *Greenwood* by Michael Christie, and *Five Little Indians* by Michelle Good.

For those interested, the top ten included works by Margaret Atwood, Bob Joseph, Cherie Dimaline, and Jessica Johns, among others.

### Where

These works are set throughout Canada, including Alberta, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia.

### When

These works primarily take place in the 21st century.

### Why

These bestsellers could be of interest to AU learners who enjoy diverse themes, such as environmentalism, trauma, and loss. They can also help readers learn more about Canada’s history and present, such as what occurred during the residential school system and the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples, issues with the environment, as well as concerns about Alberta’s oil sands.

### How

AU’s wide range of diverse courses make it easy to study this topic in depth. Courses related to the works of bestselling authors from Canada are available in a variety of disciplines, including some 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 learning more about this topic may enroll in HIST 225: History of Canada, 1867 to the Present, a junior-level, three-credit course, which “provides a survey of Canada's political, social, and economic development from 1867 to the present.” (Although no prerequisites are required, students are encouraged to have completed HIST 224: History of Canada to 1867).

In addition, student may be interested in ENVS 200: Introduction to Environmental Studies, a junior-level, three-credit course, which “introduces students to the field of environmental studies and provides them with basic information about a variety of environmental issues, concepts, debates, events, and actors or thinkers.” (No prerequisites are required for this course). Happy reading!

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



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

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

### **Facebook:**

**Award Winners!** A top contributor on the Facebook page received an AU scholarship, asking if others received one. Students received awards for BSc Computing and Information Systems, math, and AU history. A student's 99% average resulted in a win of the Dipak Saraswati Memorial Award, where other AU students celebrated the win, including with an image of an ecstatic Kermit the Frog.

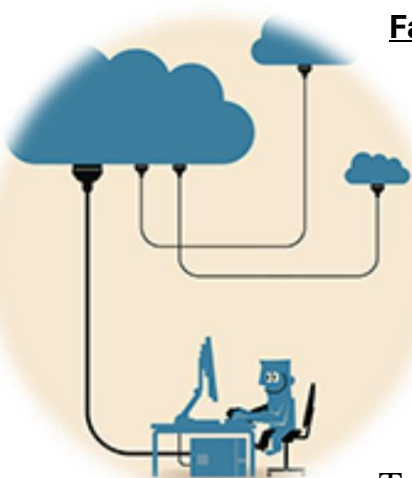
### **Reddit:**

**The professor offers weekly Teams meetings.** A student asks how often students access academic tutors and experts. One student's reply indicated receipt of minimal feedback. Another student received excellent instructor feedback from Dr. Goth, Dr. Treu, and Dr. Jones. Another student stated that ACCT253's professor provides live team Q&A meetings once a week. This student hopes such experiences continue.

### **Twitter:**

**Welcome Orientation by AUSU.** @Athabascau writes, "New and returning undergrads, don't miss the @AUstudentsunion 2024 Welcome Orientation! Connect with the #AthabascaU community, discover key student resources, and get top tips for success. <https://www.athabascau.ca/news/events/ausu-2024-welcome-orientation>."

**Attention Accountants!** @Athabascau writes, "Are you an accountant looking to get inspired and take your career to the next level? Consider attending the @CPACanada ONE Conference in Calgary, Sept. 10-11. And if you do, stop by the @athabascaUbiz booth to say hi! <https://theone.cpacanada.ca/>."



## DIY Caramelized Onion & Roasted Garlic Flatbread

Xine Wang



C Recently a lot of family members had the chance to visit me from overseas and I was looking for easy recipes as appetizers for my guests. I wanted appetizers that would be unique, not store-bought. Then after asking around my auntie, a kitchen snob, she recommended that I start with caramelized onion and garlic flatbread. It is an easy favorite in her home and great for entertaining families with children. The sweet and savory combination makes for a hearty snack. Moreover, it is so simple that if you wanted to cut corners by using store-bought flatbread, the taste is just as gourmet as those you'd try in a restaurant.

### Ingredients

#### For the Flatbread:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup warm water
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp honey or sugar
- 1 tsp active dry yeast

#### For the Topping:

- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 1 bulb of garlic
- 3 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- Fresh herbs (like thyme, rosemary or green onions) for garnish

### Instructions

#### Preparing the Dough:

1. Activate the Yeast:
  - In a small bowl, mix warm water, honey (or sugar), and yeast. Let it sit for about 5-10 minutes until it becomes frothy.
2. Make the Dough:
  - In a large bowl, combine flour and salt. Add the yeast mixture and olive oil.
  - Mix until a dough forms. Knead the dough on a floured surface for about 5-7 minutes until smooth and elastic.





- Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with a damp cloth, and let it rise for about 1 hour, or until doubled in size.



### Preparing the Toppings:

1. Caramelize the Onions:
  - Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the sliced onions and a pinch of salt.
  - Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 25-30 minutes until the onions are golden brown and caramelized. Add balsamic vinegar during the last 5 minutes of cooking. Set aside.
2. Roast the Garlic:
  - Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
  - Cut the top off the garlic bulb to expose the cloves. Drizzle with 1 tbsp of olive oil and wrap in aluminum foil.
  - Roast in the oven for about 30-35 minutes until the cloves are soft and golden. Once cooled, squeeze the roasted garlic out of the skins and mash.

### Assembling the Flatbread:

1. Preheat the Oven:
  - Preheat the oven to 475°F (245°C). Place a baking sheet or pizza stone in the oven to heat.
2. Shape the Dough:
  - Punch down the risen dough and divide it into 2 portions. Roll out each portion into a thin oval or rectangle on a lightly floured surface.
3. Add the Toppings:
  - Spread the roasted garlic paste over the flatbread dough.
  - Top with caramelized onions and shredded mozzarella cheese.
  - Season with salt and pepper.
4. Bake:
  - Carefully transfer the flatbreads to the preheated baking sheet or pizza stone.
  - Bake for about 10-12 minutes until the crust is golden and the cheese is bubbly and melted.
5. Garnish and Serve:
  - Remove from the oven and sprinkle with fresh herbs. Slice and serve warm.



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



## "Passing the Baton: Welcoming the 2024-2025 AUSU Executive Committee"

### AUSU UPDATE

April 12, 2024



**Passing the Baton:**  
Welcoming the 2024-2025 AUSU  
Executive Committee

The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) would like to thank our outgoing 2023-2024 Executive Committee, including President Naju Syed, VP External Manmeet Kaur, VP Finance and Administration Chantel Groening (formerly Bradley), and VP Community and Wellness Natalia Iwanek. Their commitment and dedication to student success have helped guide our organization and enhance the student experience at Athabasca University (AU) over the past year. To celebrate and reflect with them, check out the latest AUSU Open Mic Podcast, "[Episode 86: AUSU Executives Wrap Up Their Term.](#)" This episode explores the wins and personal growth experienced

by your outgoing student executive leaders.

With the upcoming AUSU Council changeover meeting on April 18th, we are thrilled to [welcome the incoming 2024-2025 AUSU Executive Committee](#). Chantel Groening will be moving to the role of President, having served the past year as your VP Finance and Administration. Jan Lehmann will step into the role of VP External, eager to forge strong partnerships and advocate for our students on a provincial and federal level. Diana Ramirez, your new VP Finance and Administration, will help ensure the organization is fiscally responsible and managed effectively. And, Olivia Shepherd will take on the VP Community and Wellness role, committed to fostering a supportive and healthy learning environment for all AU students.

We are excited to see the new heights this dynamic team will reach and look forward to a year of growth, achievement, and student advocacy!

Provided by

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

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