

**THE**

# **VOICE**

**MAGAZINE**

Volume 16 Issue 38  
September 26, 2008

## **This World**

One continent,  
22 days

## **The Gift**

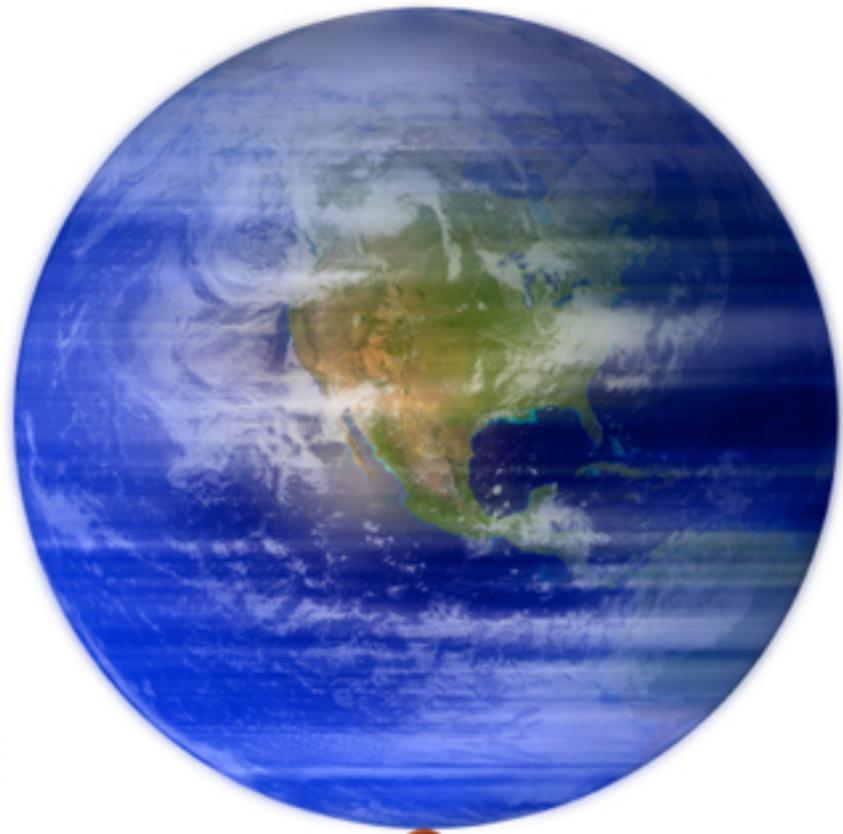
A tribute to Ian Tyson

## **Porkpie Hat**

One sunny day

*Plus:*

*The Interviewer, From Where I Sit,  
From the Gallery, and much more...*



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**The Voice  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



## THIS WORLD

Christina M. Frey

## Across the Continent in 22 Days

## Part I: Anchorage, Alaska to Dawson City, Yukon Territories

*This is the first instalment in a series chronicling the adventures of the author; her husband, Adam; and two-year-old daughter, Kiersten, as they travelled by car from Alaska to Louisiana in summer 2008.*



*The grandeur of a glacier, enroute from Anchorage, AK*

Normal people have normal summer vacations. They go to the beach for the weekend. They camp in the mountains for a week. They kick back on the patio and relax.

Normal people definitely do not spend three weeks driving across the continent from Alaska to Louisiana.

They're missing a lot.

Two years ago, when my husband and I drove from Florida to Alaska—five-week-old daughter in tow—friends and relatives thought we were crazy. And in retrospect, we probably were.

But without question, crazy enough to do it again—without blinking an eye.

That's why we found ourselves on the road again this past July. We knew that few things could compare with the chance to experience the vast and varied landscapes of North America, from the high north to the Deep South. And we knew that no headache, argument, tantrum, or \$70 gas receipt could make us regret our adventure driving from almost one end of the continent to the other.

### **Day 1: Anchorage, AK to Tok, AK**

It's the first day on the road, and despite a resolve to leave at the break of day, we head out close to lunchtime. We've settled on travelling approximately 300 miles a day—which translates as six or seven hours—although in more remote parts we'll have to adjust that figure. In many northern areas, there's little in the way of amenities and hotels (or even humans) for hundreds of miles, so our itinerary is largely limited by where the towns are located.



Although we're still in the land of the midnight sun—or maybe more like 11 p.m. sun at this point—and could travel safely later, we're somewhat bound by Kiersten's schedule. Her good humour gives out by supertime (earlier if she doesn't nap), so we hope to reach each day's destination by five in the afternoon.

We're using the [Milepost](#), a mile-by-mile itinerary of the Alaska Highway and most of the other major routes in Alaska and northwestern Canada. Aside from its usefulness for planning our rest stops, we're especially

enjoying the historical, geographical, and cultural tidbits about the places we're passing through. It's helping us connect with the area in a way we couldn't have experienced without it.

A few hours into the drive, I'm noticing one major difference between this trip and our 2006 drive: the traffic, or rather the surprising lack of it. Two years ago there were long lines of RVs, but now we're the only car on the highway for large stretches. We suspect that skyrocketing fuel prices have turned people off road trips this summer. It's further confirmation that this drive may have been a crazy idea!

There also doesn't seem to be much wildlife out and about. That can't be explained by the rising cost at the pump, so we're a bit mystified. We'll be driving through a lot of remote areas, so we're hoping to get some good wildlife sightings in. In particular, we want to see a bear. Despite constant warnings about bear safety, we didn't even see a bear paw print during our two years in Alaska. We're determined to see one during this trip, no matter what.

***I'm behind the wheel,  
supposedly to give Adam  
a break from driving, but  
secretly to give myself a  
break from being court  
jester to the Princess in  
the back seat.***

For a freedom-loving two-year-old suddenly strapped in a car seat for six to eight hours a day, Kiersten's doing well, but she's almost entirely dependent on us for amusement. Constantly entertaining her with books, puppets, games, songs, and other clown tricks is exhausting me—not to mention giving me a permanent crick in my neck from twisting around. At this point, three weeks on the road is looking interminable. We're glad we bought her some CDs of kiddie songs; as annoying as they are in themselves (how many times have we heard "Old MacDonald?"), they're giving us some relief.

Although we all started out in good spirits, our sense of adventure wanes as the afternoon wears on. Kiersten, overexcited by the novelty of travel, has skipped her nap and is grouchy and bored. Nothing seems to cheer her up. After almost 30 long minutes of singing, reading, explaining, playing, and even putting "Old MacDonald" on repeat, she eventually falls asleep, but not after enough screaming that we're almost regretting this trip already.

That evening we arrive in Tok, Alaska, an important junction town: it's here that travellers coming to Alaska can turn south toward Anchorage or west to Fairbanks. Travelling in the direction of Canada, there are two routes: the famous Alaska Highway southeast toward Whitehorse, or the Taylor Highway/Top of the World Highway to Dawson City, Yukon Territories. Although we'll link up with the Alaska Highway in Whitehorse later, we've decided to take the northerly route from Tok so that we'll have the chance to visit Dawson City. It will put us a day out of our way, but we'd hate to miss the opportunity when we're so close.

## **Day 2: Tok, Alaska to Dawson City, Yukon Territories**

The next morning, we leave late (again), but half an hour earlier than yesterday, so we're doing better. I'm behind the wheel, supposedly to give Adam a break from driving, but secretly to give myself a break from being court jester to the Princess in the back seat. There's still almost no traffic, although we manage to get delayed by construction for a while. The detour is so winding that for a few miles we're not sure whether we're being rerouted to some dead end by a practical joker.

Most of the landscape we pass through this morning is dead forest—acres upon acres of blackened trees, as far as the eye can see. A 2004 forest fire here destroyed millions of acres, and regrowth, if any, seems slow. It seems to have scared off the animals too, as we don't even see so much as a chipmunk, let alone a bear.

Around lunchtime we arrive in the tiny settlement of Chicken. Legend claims it was supposed to be called Ptarmigan, but was named after a more common bird because the settlers couldn't agree on the spelling.

Chicken's a very small community, with a population of 21 in the summer—and only six people remain there year-round. It's remote, much more so than most of the places we'll pass through this trip; there are no telephones and no flush toilets in town, although surprisingly, they do have Internet. Before the Internet, business owners had to give their order lists to bus drivers and trust they'd fax them in when they reached a town. And regardless of the method, those staying the winter need to order their winter supplies well in advance, because once the snow hits, Chicken's cut off from the rest of the world. It's a different life, but the community seems like a family; out in the wilderness, you pretty much have to be able to rely on one another.



*Dawson City - Canada's Paris of the North*

Chicken's notable for something else, at least for those driving the Taylor Highway toward Dawson City: it's approximately where the pavement ends. As we drive along the mud-gravel-dirt mix and bounce through ruts, I keep thinking that I'm not on a road at all, but rather driving toward the barn behind some farm back in Ontario. We can only move at 30 mph without permanently damaging our protesting car, and we realize just why MapQuest recommended seven hours for a 180-mile trip.

Just past Chicken is the turnoff for Eagle, Alaska. It's a remote settlement along the Yukon River, and it's also home to Yukon-Charley Rivers National Park. The US National Park Service has a "passport" program for collecting stamps and stickers from national parks and historic sites, and we've become obsessed with filling our book. Eagle is only 100 miles from the highway we're on, and we'd been desperately clinging to the hope of making a side trip for that stamp—but when we realize that the road conditions are even worse, we regretfully decide to skip it and press on to Dawson City. One hundred miles isn't far, except when it takes four hours to go one way.

Late in the afternoon, we cross into Canada again! But it doesn't really feel like home, since it's such remote wilderness out here. We're now on the Top of the World Highway, which I think should be called the Top of the Mountain highway; we're level with or above the rain clouds and can see steep valleys below us. Although the downpour we drive through makes the road a little slippery, it's doing wonders to clean off the mud we picked up driving from Chicken.

Eventually, the road twists and turns downwards and we need to slam on the brakes; we're suddenly at the Yukon River, which lies between the highway we're driving and Dawson City.

There's a free ferry that operates during the summer to bring residents and visitors back and forth between Dawson City and West Dawson on the opposite bank. During the northern winters, the Yukon freezes solidly enough for traffic to cross freely. However, during breakup and thaw in late spring, the river can't be crossed safely by any means, and the residents of West Dawson are cut off from the town until the water's clear enough for the ferry to operate.

We're curious as to why there's no bridge across the river; later, we learn that they've been trying to put one in for years, but conflicting property interests and concerns about damaging historic sites keep stalling the project.

That night, we stay in a cute bed and breakfast downtown. We're excited for tomorrow: no early morning driving, just sightseeing for most of the day. We can't wait to explore the "Paris of the North"!

## Voice Vacation



It's that time of year: classes have started, the leaves are turning gold, and *The Voice* is taking its brief autumn sojourn.

We'll be on vacation from September 29 to October 3, scrunching through leaves, finishing last year's Halloween candy, and getting ready to bring you some fabulous fall and winter issues.

We'll be back with more great stuff, including all your regular favourites, on Friday, October 10 (but we won't be able to help sneaking a peek at our email, so keep sending in your comments and letters).

Pull out your fall jacket, enjoy the crisp autumn air, and we'll see you on October 10!

## ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



## Culture Shock

When Stephen Harper tried to slip his recent \$45 million in arts cuts under the radar, he probably didn't count on the backlash it would create.

And for a political leader who likes to keep a tight rein on who can say what and when, it's even more surprising that, after alienating those who work in the industry, he went on to put his foot in his mouth and insult "ordinary people" as well.

But Harper's definition of "ordinary people" is a little confusing. Who, exactly, are these just-plain-folks

who have no desire for anything but the concrete pursuits of eating, sleeping, and working; who shy from such cultural interests as music, comedy, films, and dance?

As he told reporters, "You know, I think when ordinary, working people come home, turn on the TV and see . . . a bunch of people at a rich gala all subsidized by the taxpayers, claiming their subsidies aren't high enough when they know the subsidies have actually gone up, I'm not sure that's something that resonates with ordinary people."

By Harper's definition, ordinary people enjoy watching TV. Which means they also enjoy (can it be?) the very same cultural products that Harper exhibits such disdain for. Based on name-recognition alone, it would appear these "ordinary people" have an enthusiastic liking for all kinds of artistic offerings, even those created by other Canadians: Celine Dion, The Kids in the Hall, Kiefer Sutherland, Shania Twain, Leonard Cohen, Margaret Atwood, Yann Martel, Tantoo Cardinal, Karen Kain, Mary Walsh, William Shatner, Rick Mercer.

All struggling unknowns at one point, just like the thousands of other talented Canadians who work in the cultural sector and rely on grant programs to allow them to build a career (as do athletes, students, small business owners, and apprentices in the trades).

And while the list of talented Canadians who represent us so well in the arts is impressive, longer still is the list of those who work behind the scenes in what (make no mistake) is very much an industry, providing jobs for thousands more: writers, costume makers, producers, makeup artists, set designers, carpenters, truck drivers, lighting technicians, caterers, cleaners, electricians, teachers.

Contrary to Harper's portrayal of Canadian artists as "a bunch of people at a rich gala," the average Canadian artist earns \$23,500 a year—in an industry where they and other cultural workers generated \$39 billion for our economy in 2002, or nearly four per cent of our gross domestic product.

Which brings us back to the "ordinary people" Stephen Harper thinks have no interest in culture and the arts in all their rich variety. Is he referring to the thousands of ordinary Canadians who rely on the sector to pay their mortgages and support their families? Or the millions whose lives are enriched by TV, radio, the Internet, books, magazines, CDs, DVDs, dance, community theatre, photography, and art galleries?

Whether it's hip hop, poetry, or comedy, "ordinary" Canadians embrace culture of all types. And as the backlash against these funding cuts grows, it appears our prime minister may be in for a culture shock.

## AU COMPUTING SERVICES – NOTICE TO STUDENTS



### System Upgrade

Attention Students - From Thursday, October 2, 2008 at 3 p.m. until Monday, October 6, 2008 at 8 a.m., the AU Student Information Computer System will be shut down to implement a major upgrade.

Access to online course materials may be limited throughout this period. The AU Student Information System administers the following functions:

- Admissions
- Course registrations
- Student financial records
- Academic history
- Student personal information (address, etc.)
- Tutor assignments
- Professor information and professor approvals
- Course materials (versions and revisions)
- Course coordinators
- Transcripts
- Transfer credit
- Letters, including e-letters and letters of permission
- Grades
- Exams and requests for exams
- Tax receipts

We apologize for the inconvenience. Please call the AU Info Centre at 1-800-788-9041 (Canada/U.S.) or 780-675-6100 if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you, Athabasca University Computing Services

### 2008/09 AU CALENDAR



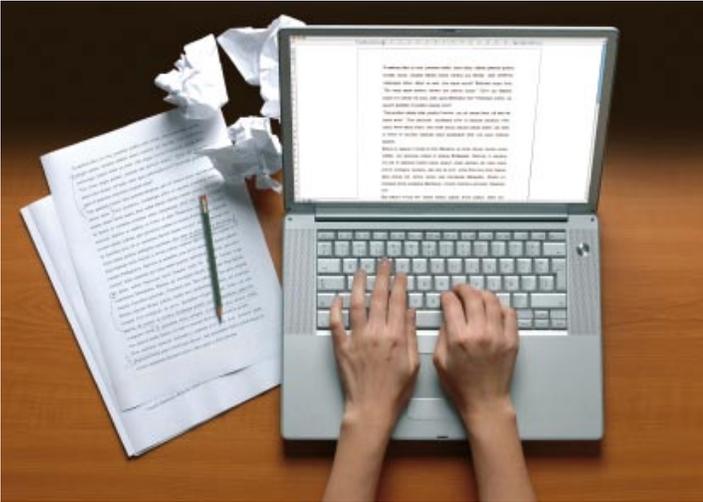
### New Academic Calendar Now Available

AU's new 2008/09 academic calendar is now in effect, and it's your official resource for all the latest info on courses, programs, fees, and more.

The undergraduate calendar is available [here](#), and you can link to the graduate studies calendar from the same page or click [here](#). Course fees and regulations are effective September 1, 2008, to August 31, 2009.

Whether you're signing up for new courses, choosing a program, or thinking about becoming an AU student, the online calendar has it all!

## THE 2008 VOICE MAGAZINE WRITING CONTEST!



Write for *The Voice* and win money for your education!

*The Voice* is launching its 2008 writing contest, with categories for both fiction and non-fiction.

We've got over \$1,000 in prizes to give away: one winner in each category will receive a scholarship of one Athabasca University undergraduate course.

Please read the contest rules and regulations and submission guidelines carefully to ensure you are not disqualified.

It's free to enter, but the length limits are firm and all entries that go beyond these limits will be disqualified. Good luck!

### Categories

#### Non-Fiction:

In 1,500 words or less, write about any issue affecting freedom of speech. You may write about issues in the press, in politics, or on a personal scale. You may focus on current issues of free speech, or take a historical approach. Feel free to use research or statistics in your article (with proper citations), or write a creative opinion piece.

#### Fiction:

This category is open to your imagination! Write a 1,500 word or less fiction submission in any genre or format. Short stories, poetry, a scene from a play, even a comic. Be creative!

### Rules and Regulations

- The *Voice* writing contest is open to anyone 16 years of age or older, with the following exceptions: AU, AUSU, and *Voice* staff and AUSU councillors are not eligible to enter the contest.
- Winning entries will be published in *The Voice*. *The Voice* reserves the right to print non-winning entries at a rate of remuneration in accordance with current *Voice* freelance submission rates. *The Voice* may use portions of non-winning non-fiction entries in a composite about perspectives on free speech. No remuneration will be provided for such use.
- All decisions regarding this contest and the selection of winners remain with the judging panel and are final.
- Entries will be judged by a panel to be selected by the *Voice* editors, and this panel may include: AU students, AU tutors, and/or AUSU councillors. The panel will include at least 3 members.
- *The Voice* editors will collect articles and oversee the judging, but will not be judges.

- Entries must be original works that have not been printed or published elsewhere (including online), and must not be course assignment papers or derivatives of.
- Entries must not contain any information that would make the identity of the author evident to judges. To ensure fairness, all entries will be forwarded to the judging panel with a reference number attached, but no personally identifying information. *The Voice* editors will keep the identity of the authors private until the contest closes. *The Voice* editors will keep a record of the authors of submissions, and will be the sole owner of this list.
- Entries will not be edited for grammar, spelling, or content, although *The Voice* editors may black out any personally identifying information contained within the submission. Otherwise, entries will be forwarded to the judging panel as is, with the exception that all entries will be converted to use the same file format, margins, font size, and font style to ensure that all entries are equally readable.
- The deadline for submissions in both categories will be December 31, 2008. The winners will be announced by February 28, 2009. *The Voice* reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.
- One grand prize winner will be selected in both the fiction and non-fiction categories. If no entries are received in one of the categories, the prize money will be returned to the *Voice* scholarship budget. Prizes will be awarded in the form of a certificate for one free Athabasca University undergraduate course. Prize certificates have no cash value.
- *The Voice* reserves the right to add additional, secondary prizes.
- *The Voice* is not responsible for lost emails. *The Voice* editors will confirm receipt of all entries by email. Please follow up if you do not receive a reply in two business days.
- All entrants agree to allow their name and city of residence to be printed, along with their submission, should it be selected as a winning entry. No further remuneration—beyond the contest prize—will be paid to the contest winner when their entry is printed.
- Winners will be asked to sign a standard Release and Indemnity form; each prize winner agrees to release the sponsor and its agents from any liability in connection with the prizes awarded in this contest.
- Any entrant found to be tampering with the contest results, or attempting to influence any of the judging members, or using any forums or other public communications media to advise others of which entry is theirs will be disqualified; or if *The Voice* editors determine, at their sole discretion, that any other form of tampering has been attempted, that entrant will be disqualified.
- No preference will be given to regular *Voice* writers. Entries will not identify the writer as a regular *Voice* contributor when sent to the judging panel.
- Where applicable, this contest is subject to all federal, provincial, and municipal laws. Contest void where prohibited.

***The deadline for submissions in both categories will be December 31, 2008. The winners will be announced by February 28, 2009. The Voice reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.***

### Submission Guidelines

- Your submission must be an electronic file attached to an email and submitted to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org). Submissions sent as the body of an email will not be accepted. Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) if you require instructions on how to attach a file to an email.
- Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format [.doc or .docx], rich text format [.rtf] or plain text format [.txt].

- If you use footnotes or endnotes, type them in at the end of the document, rather than using the endnote feature of your word processor.
- If you use a word processor other than Word or work on a Mac computer, you can save a file in one of these alternate formats using the 'save as' function and selecting the desired format on the save menu. Contact *The Voice* editors if you require assistance in formatting your submission. Users of older Macs may have to send entries in HTML format.
- Each entrant may submit one entry in each of the two categories.
- All entries must be under 1,500 words due to judging time constraints. Length will be determined by the word count feature in Microsoft Word. Your references and citations section will not be included in the word count.
- References should be formatted consistently according to a standardized publishing style guide, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) or the MLA press style.
- Entries should not include unnecessary formatting such as drop caps, graphics (unless the graphic is integral to the work), or unusual fonts. Entries must be text; scans of handwritten or typed documents will not be accepted.
- The email should include the following information: Your full name, AU student ID number (if applicable), email address, telephone number, mailing address, the title of your entry, and whether you are submitting to the fiction or non-fiction category.
- Make sure non-fiction entries are based on the topic question detailed above. Fiction entries can be on any topic you like. Do not include your contact information within your article but be sure to include a title.

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Non-Fiction entries will be judged on originality, creativity, accuracy, and how well your support your assertions with data or argument. You will also be judged on the presentation of your article, including professionalism, proper spelling, grammar and syntax, and readability. You may write in journalistic style or essay format.
- Fiction entries will be judged on creativity, entertainment value, and the originality of your writing style.
- Regardless of the genre you choose, you will be judged on the effectiveness of your piece and your technical writing skills.

Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) if you have any questions.

## DID YOU KNOW?

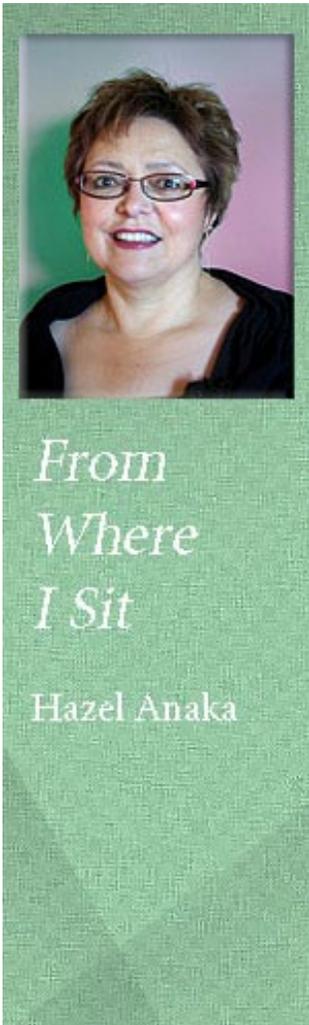


### Convocation Photo Album Online!

If you're in the mood for something bright and colourful before the leaves begin to turn, you don't need to look any further than AU's Convocation 2008 [photo album](#).

There are more than 70 photos of AU grads, along with their reflections of what made their education journeys special. You'll also find photos of honorary degree recipients and other special guests who attended the ceremony at the AU campus from June 12 to 14, and links to more detailed write-ups about them.

There's also a link to [previous convocation photo albums](#) (all the way back to 2002), so you never know who you might catch a glimpse of!



## Close But No Cigar

"If I never run a combine again I don't think I'll be too sad," were my words to Roy a week or so ago. It's been a good run but I think I could live without the pressure.

I've been running a combine for at least 25 years and frankly the thrill is gone. I used to enjoy the testosterone rush of operating a big, powerful, expensive machine. And running it well. But as we trained a neophyte the last two days of Harvest '08 we got to recounting the horror stories of harvests and helpers past.

I've had my share of mishaps and done some boneheaded things when fatigue overtakes me. Call me crazy, but I don't think human beings are supposed to work non-stop for days or weeks on end. After 12 hours behind the controls I'm practically hallucinating. Once out of the combine, everything seems both louder and quieter than normal. Driving a pickup truck home seems foreign. Walking seems strange and unsteady.

For the record, let me say it's impossible to be a farmer and go through harvest and not believe in God. It's very apparent very soon just how small and insignificant we are in the big picture. Without His blessings there would be no crop, no harvest, no livelihood, no life. There is no man-made substitute for the warm, sunny, windy days required to take the crop off, though grain dryers and aeration bins try their best.

There's nothing like watching hawks swoop down and grab a snack (a.k.a. field mouse). There's nothing quite like Alberta's big sky, fall foliage, and gorgeous sunsets. I know we are blessed when both the equipment and the people keep on going despite advancing years and worn parts.

We're not even big farmers. We only seed about 500 acres. Our two John Deeres are old but paid for. Should we be borrowing to buy a brand new one for the same price as a house in Edmonton or a newer (than ours) one for the price of a house in Andrew? Or how about a tandem grain trailer? That would take the grain hauling pressure off Roy.

We spent \$25,000 a few months ago to enlarge and convert three old grain bins into hopper bins with aeration fans. No shovelling of grain required when you go to sell it. Plus you can take the crop off with less than perfect moisture levels. Where does it all end, especially when we should be slowing down and don't have a child waiting in the wings to take this all over?

Throw in a full-time job in another community and you've got one tired mama. I'm not thrilled getting up before six, putting in a day's work, driving 50 kilometres home, and then combining until 10 or 11 at night only to repeat it again the next day and the next for as long as it takes to get the crop off.

We worked like hell this weekend trying to beat a bad, rain-filled forecast and finish the final field of canola. When Roy laid his weary body down at three this morning there was half an hour of combining left. I got five and a half hours of sleep. Despite the blessings, that's why if I never combine again, it'll be okay, from where I sit.

# The Interviewer

*It is the ninth decade of the twentieth century...*

*written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis*

## *Caramel Baby #12: People Like Us*



Okay. So what are the organisation's goals?



Us?



Well, for one thing, we really want to encourage white people to have more kids. Soon there won't be any of us left!



Aryans!



Define "Aryans".



Actually, that's a fallacy, Wayne. The word "Aryan" refers to a language group, and, by extension, to the people who spoke those languages, most of whom were neither tall nor blond.



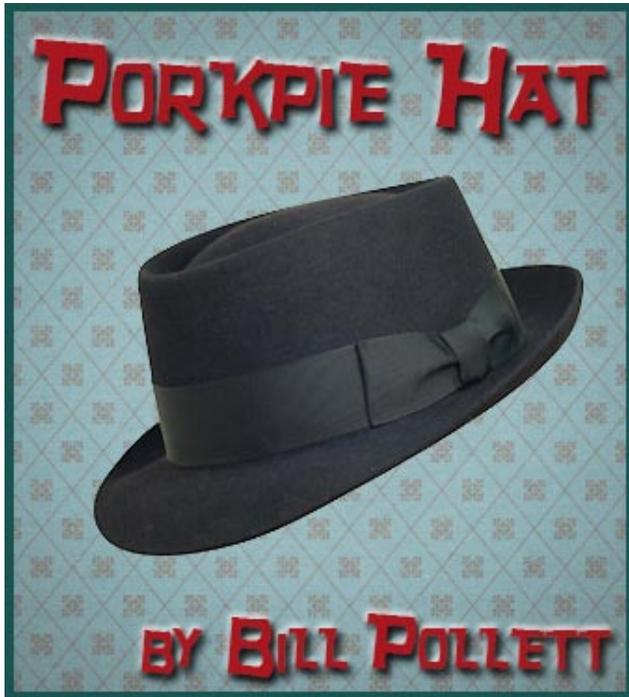
You know, people with fair skin, blue eyes, tall. The master race.



Call it- whatever you want! The MASTER RACE!

*I've necked with every boy in youth group!*

*Next: Tall Blond Jew*



## One Sunny Day

One sunny day, perhaps it is mid-July, a boy sits down on the soft, warm grass beneath a pear tree and opens up a book. Perhaps it is a picture book, a book of poetry, an almanac, or instruction manual.

Above him, there are small songbirds flitting from branch to branch. The sun is warm on his face and his hands. Close by, there is a cornfield drowsy with the throb of crickets. Try as he might to remain awake, his eyes begin to close.

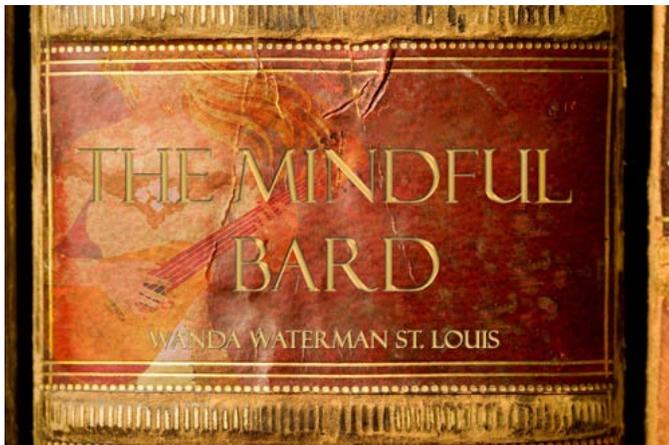
When he wakes up, it is the dead of night. Planets and satellites are migrating above his spinning head. Sensing he has slept for a long, long time, he looks down at the yellowed pages of his book, at the wrinkled skin of his hands. Clearly, he has fallen under a spell, a curse. Touching his own face, he finds spectacles and stubble.

There is an abandoned car on the edge of the field, a corroded metal husk. He climbs into the driver's seat, looks in the cracked rear view. What he sees is like one of those trick-of-the-eye pictures, the ones where you can see two different images, depending on how your mind interprets them: young woman or old, dancer or monster. What he sees is a wayward boy, careless, carefree. What he sees is an ancient man, watchful and scarred. They are both of them afraid.

Knowing he can never return home in this condition, he strikes out across the fields, heading for no particular destination. He tucks the book (poetry, as it turns out) in his jacket pocket. Taking inventory, he finds a few coins, some tobacco, a box of matches, a compass, a letter written in a language he does not understand.

He walks all through the long day. Everything is strange; there are no recognizable landmarks. Eventually he comes to a road, the road turns into a lane, and the lane leads to the sea. There is a sheltered bay. There are graceful sea creatures surfacing and disappearing, and in the early evening light, he can imagine how mariners must once have mistaken them for mermaids. He builds a driftwood fire, and roasts mussels. He reads "Kubla Khan" and falls asleep.

Much later, he wakes up again, no longer two people in one. He is only an old man with poetry in his hands. The wayward boy is lifted above the head of a woman the man suddenly recognizes as his own daughter. Seeing the old man awake, the boy runs across the sand to greet him. Together they draw fleeting pictures in the sand, watch their footprints dissolve again, again, again. Together they spot mermaids, they turn over rocks. Both of them are amazed.



## Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

**CD:** Various Artists, *The Gift: A Tribute to Ian Tyson*

**Release date:** 2007

**Label:** Stony Plain Recording

*Think I'll go out to Alberta—weather's good there in the fall*

*Got some friends that I could go to working for*

*Still I wish you'd change your mind, if I asked you one more time,*

*But we've been through this a hundred times or more.*

“Four Strong Winds” by Ian Tyson

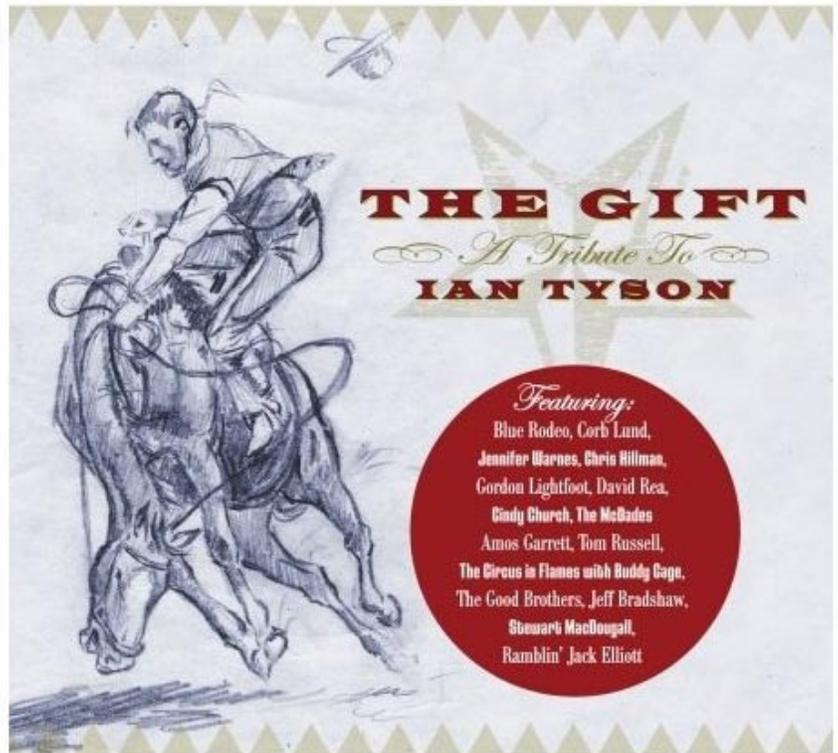
There's cowboy mythology, and then there's the Ian Tyson mythology. Tyson's own history sounds like a Tyson song, a combination of story-telling, myth-making (truth-making, really), and prairie-wide, mountain-high stretches of time and space, beauty and melancholy.

Here's what I remember (from years ago, so it may not be accurate): First of all there's the famous musical and romantic partnership with Sylvia, who fought with Ian's former inamoratas in the ladies rooms of bars they played and inspired one of Ian's most fertile songwriting periods.

Among other big names in the early '60s folk movement, the couple befriended Bob Dylan and were later amazed at his rocket launch to stardom.

Sylvia eventually felt like only half a person and left Ian to nurse a broken heart on his big lonely ranch.

On a television special years later Ian recounted his version of those dark years when he found a solo career thrust on him just as the folk movement was fading (blown out of the water by the arrival of the Beatles) and the country music industry was still way too conservative to accept him as one of their own.



So is it country-and-western, or country and western? I can't think of too many acts that don't fall neatly into one category or the other, and off the top of my head I can think of no one who exemplifies both at once. What's the difference? Whatever differences there are between east and west, settler and explorer, traditionalist and maverick, mountain and plain, ploughed furrow and tumbleweed, family man and loner, farmer and rancher.

According to Holger Petersen, who co-produced *The Gift* with Peter North: "Ian is a working rancher and cowboy who writes from experience. His lyrics and imagery of cowboy culture can be incredibly detailed and localised but at the same time are so well done they become universal in appeal."

It's appropriate that *The Gift* was recorded in various locales all over North America, because one striking thing about Tyson songs is how colossal and multi-faceted they make North America feel. The Easterner headed west for work in "Four Strong Winds" (can a Maritimer ever hear this song without going all gooey inside?), the bronco rider in "Someday Soon," and the Montana artist in "The Gift" are part of a network of archetypes holding this mythic continent together despite the best efforts of nationalists and other scoundrels.

I too wondered what all the fuss was about with Dylan, why he inspired so much fawning idolatry in music fans. He wrote some masterpieces but I thought most of his songs were as gangly and spread-out as a new colt. Ian's songs were always tight, simple, and matched to their tunes—paragons of the craft. Ah, but the race is not to the swift . . .

These songs are all beautifully interpreted, some by those who are already icons themselves. Corb Lund is not only a cowboy songster himself but a friend of Tyson's (I suspect it was Tyson who helped Lund see himself as more of a cowboy poet than a country crooner). And Gordon Lightfoot is to the urban hobo what Tyson is to the range rider.

Petersen says of the lineup: "Ian has had a huge influence over many artists since his Ian and Sylvia days. Most artists were very keen to be involved and said they were honoured to be asked."

Charles Marion Russell's haunting drawings on the CD cover are the loop in the lasso. The title song is a tribute to Russell, an artist as true to the spirit of the Old West as Ian himself.

Once you decide to follow the artist's path one of your goals should be to expand empathy and imagination; these are what lead to good art, or rather, to paraphrase Maritain, art that is authentic, original, and delightful. To this end it helps to immerse yourself in specific cultures and see the world from the perspectives of those within that culture. There are few cultures that have proved as inspiring and thought-provoking as that of the North American cowboy. I heartily recommend it. And this album.

*The Gift: A Tribute to Ian Tyson* manifests five of *The Mindful Bard's* criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it makes me want to be a better artist; 3) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 5) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful endeavour.

**Charles Marion  
Russell's haunting  
drawings on the CD  
cover are the loop in  
the lasso**

## AUSU This Month



### Merchandise Still for Sale

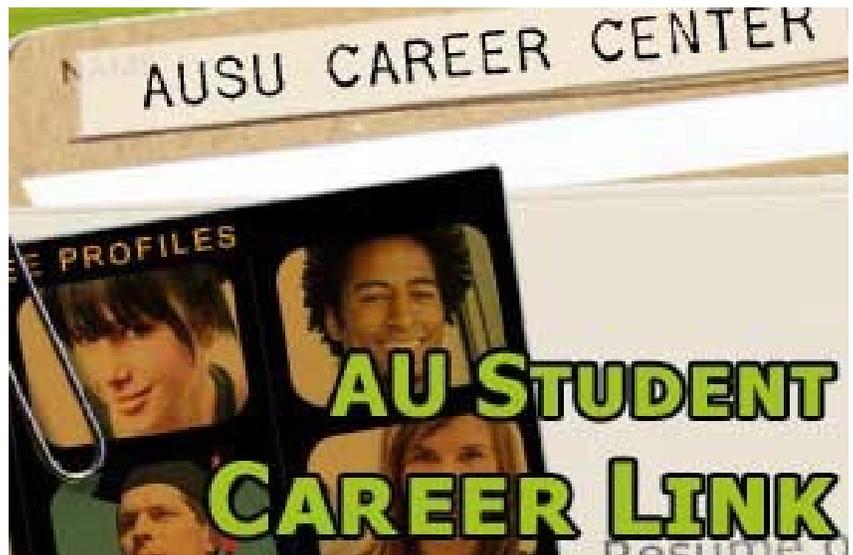
We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere. The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go. With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it. *The Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.

### AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

### Employment Site is here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there. The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student. Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!



### Appointments

AUSU VP External, Barb Rielly, has stepped down from her position as chair of the AUSU Awards Committee, and new Councillor Bethany Porter has taken on the role. Council wishes Bethany good luck in this position, which can involve making some hard decisions.

Increasing AUSU's representation within AU, VP Finance and Administration, Sarah Kertcher, has been appointed to AU's integrated learning centre steering committee. This committee will examine the possibility of integrating all AU sites in the Edmonton Area into one building. Sarah will ensure that the committee keeps concerns of our members with respect to ease of access and exam conditions as well as AUSU's own special needs for storage and physical office space well in mind.

The MyAU steering committee sees two new AUSU representatives, President Karl Low, and VP External Barb Rielly, joining to provide their input on how MyAU could be better structured to meet your needs. If there's something that's been bugging you about the MyAU system, now is a great time to call or email our office and let them know. We'll be sure to bring your concerns forward.

### SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however.

Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

### AUSU Handbook/Planner 2008 has a few copies left!

We still have a number of copies of the 2008 AUSU planner available. We're getting closer to the end of the year, however, so our supplies are steadily decreasing. We've added a few enhancements this year, including cheat sheets for common citation styles, a clip-in page-marker ruler, and a funky fridge magnet to remind you to get your weekly dose of *The Voice*.

As always, we're excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

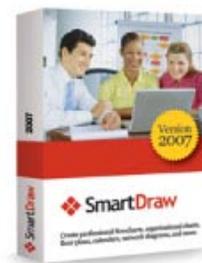
### Chat with a Councillor

Have a beef? Want to know where your \$8 per course goes or who's trying to make it work for you? Check out the AUSU chat times on our front page. Every Councillor has agreed to spend an hour each week making themselves available to you for your questions, concerns, or just to shoot the breeze while you take a break from your studying. It's not only a great way for you to learn more about what AUSU can do for you, but for us to learn what you want from AUSU. We hope to see you there!



Create professional-looking flowcharts, timelines, graphs, and more, in minutes, all by yourself. Then go spend some quality time with your family.

Free for AUSU members. Visit [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org)



 SmartDraw

## FROM THE GALLERY

Sandra Livingston



On September 22, AUSU council met for their regular public meeting and it was clear that individual councillors (both new and returning) have quickly coalesced into an effective group.

One notable item early in the meeting should interest all of you who like your radio straight from the web. Council has put together an ad hoc Audio Visual Committee, led by councillor Lonita Fraser, and the group is looking at the possibility of creating an online AUSU radio station!

Planning is in the early stages, but watch for more updates here.

Another item that council continues to address is one that's unique to AU's distance format: with members spread far and wide, and no bricks-and-mortar hallways to post flyers in, how can AUSU let new members know about all the resources that are available to them?

Along with the online discussion forums, councillor chat times, and public council meetings, there's another project underway: a monthly student orientation call-in. These drop-in meetings will be held the last day of each month at 5:30 pm MST, and the first session is scheduled for this coming Tuesday, September 30. Meetings will last one hour, though this may be adjusted based on member feedback. Councillors and staff will be on hand to answer questions for new students and existing members alike, and these call-in orientation sessions should be a great way for new AU students to find their way around the virtual campus.

One issue that may affect students in the Edmonton area is the recent discussion at AU about the possibility of relocating the Edmonton Learning Centre outside metropolitan Edmonton. The idea is still very much in the discussion stage, but AUSU council will be preparing a position policy on the subject, noting that things such as transit availability, exam costs, and other invigilation options must all be looked at carefully.

And if you're curious to know what council thinks about some other important issues, you can check out their position policies [here](#) (just scroll down to section 9.0).

In other council news, the Awards Committee has been keeping busy. The committee recently approved three computer bursaries and three emergency bursaries, and is working on creating a Returning Student award (you can find application forms and information about existing AUSU bursaries and awards [here](#)).

As well, new councillor Bethany Porter has assumed the role of Awards Committee rep, and thanked Barb Rielly for all the hard work she's devoted to the role.

Last but not least, you can rest easy if your AUSU 2008 planner is looking well worn: the 2009 edition of this very popular item is already in the works, and will include some new content based on student feedback.

The next public council meeting will be held Monday, November 17, so watch the AUSU website calendar for details. See you there, from the gallery!

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK

Mandy Gardner

**At Home: New Brunswick committed to green solutions**

While many Canadian government agencies and representatives talk about getting greener and greener, New Brunswick has been standing out as a prime example of putting your money and effort where your mouth is.

This week Herménégilde Chiasson, the lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick, went green by opting out of the usual government limousine. Chiasson instead chose a hybrid as his official vehicle.

The lieutenant-governor was quoted by [CBC News](#) as explaining that “it projects the image of responsibility” and that “we’ll eventually have to change for another source of fuel or other kind of propulsion.” Chiasson’s new hybrid is a Toyota Highlander SUV.

And as New Brunswick children headed back to school this month, the province’s very first hybrid school bus was put into action as well.

The school bus is being operated in Moncton and the vehicle is estimated to use up to 50 per cent less fuel than other school buses in the same setting. The hybrid bus is also expected to reduce emissions by up to 90 per cent over the conventional version.

The New Brunswick government has a climate change fund that was used to buy this green school bus in order to test it and compare it to conventional buses. New Brunswick Transportation Minister Denis Landry’s press release stated that his department is “working continuously to be a leader in green transportation.”

**In Foreign News: George Bush says goodbye to the United Nations**

As US President George Bush gets ready to vacate his office with the upcoming election there, he has yet again made contradictory statements. Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly this week, where he stated that the UN was a necessary organization in the fight against terrorists.

George Bush has been known to be very critical of the United Nations during his presidency. Back in 2003, as the war on Iraq was undertaken by the US, Bush continually acted in defiance of UN protocol in order to wage war on Saddam Hussein under the pretext of eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

While the UN successfully helped Iraq rid itself of virtually all its medium-range missiles, chemical warheads, and conventional weapons between 1991 and 1998, Bush’s government repeatedly refused to accept this data as good reason to hold off on military action in Iraq.

As a president in his final weeks of power, Bush’s words encouraging respect and deference to UN methodology are in stark contrast to statements made over his eight years in office. As a head of state who has been known to call the UN expensive and ineffective, this latest speech might seem a little less than sincere or honest by many citizens of the world and of America itself.

## EDUCATION NEWS

Joe Howell

**Dion pledges to open federal wallet for students****Liberals promise loans for all, regardless of family income**

LONDON (CUP) - If they had known what the Liberals were about to promise, perhaps students would have had a warmer welcome for Stéphane Dion as he arrived at the University of Western Ontario in London to unveil his party's post-secondary plank.

But the Grits had been tight-lipped, so UWO students couldn't have known Dion's bus was practically stuffed full of cash for them. Otherwise, there probably would have been more than a small, weakly chanting knot of people there to greet it when it pulled into campus this morning.

Maybe the hundreds of millions Dion promised universities for research wasn't exciting by itself. But it was coupled with guarantees of educational tax breaks; \$5,000 federal loans available to every post-secondary student, regardless of their parental income; and a bonus \$250-cheque for every student who holds a job.

All of them policies worth cheering about—if they ever see the light of day.



The crowd was thicker and more boisterous in the windowless laboratory Dion and his entourage quickly moved to after shaking a few hands. There, a throng of students clad in Western-purple and Liberal-red shirts formed a strategic backdrop for the TV cameras, along with the many microscopes cluttering the cramped lab. Textbooks were piled conspicuously beside the podium.

It all felt so scholastic.

Liberal Member of Parliament Bob Rae opened for Dion, setting the tone by interspersing snipes at Prime Minister Stephen Harper with quips. Referring to the engine trouble that forced the Liberal plane to land unexpectedly in Montreal, Rae said he'd been "up for most of the night drinking beer and yakking with friends—can anyone here relate to that?"

Shortly after, Rae said that Harper "runs a one-man band."

"We have a team—I think orchestras do well—and we're going to do well in this election," said Rae.

The party leader tried to keep the laughs going.

"Nothing was going to stop me from being here in London this morning. I would have jogged here," said Dion. "Colleges and universities are critical to Canada's success."

Dion said that due to Canada's small population and the mounting pressure from larger G-8 countries, the Liberals intended to build a "knowledge economy" based on "innovation and creativity."

"The future productivity and economic success of Canada depends on the investments we make in research and development today," said Dion, before promising to increase the amount of "indirect research funding

that universities will receive by 50 per cent, reaching an annual level of \$500 million per year within our mandate.”

He also expressed a desire for a Canada where not only “the rich are able to broaden their minds with a diploma or degree.”

To that end, Dion said he would improve tax credits, loans, and grants.

To reform the first, a Liberal government would scrap the existing student tax credits and instead institute an upfront, \$1000 grant, payable to every student, every three months, at the same time as the GST rebate.

“Students with a job will also get an additional \$250 cash,” added Dion once the applause had died down, although he did not elaborate on how much or when students had to work to qualify.

It was probably the Liberal loan reforms that best heralded the shift in policy.

“The Liberal government will make all students eligible for guaranteed student loans of \$5,000 regardless of parental income,” promised Dion.

Will it be enough to win over the post-secondary demographic and their parents?

The poll results will tell, but it is possible that the initial lack of excitement this morning was caused by the Green Party’s pre-emptive strike only days ago.

While at Nova Scotia’s St. Francis Xavier University, Green Leader Elizabeth May said she would “cut all student debt in half on completion of a diploma, including existing student debt.”

One thing is certain—the parties are courting the students.

## **CLICK OF THE WRIST - When In Rome**

**With all the airport security, travel advisories, and airline closures these days, vacations are getting more like work every day. If you’re thinking of journeying to far-off lands, here’s some interesting advice you won’t likely find in the average tourism brochure.**

**Odd Travel Guides** - This *Slate* article offers up the 10 oddest travel guides ever published, including *Bollocks to Alton Towers*, a “lyrical look at British eccentricity” that suggests such holiday marvels as the Cumberland Pencil Museum.

**The 10 Worst London Tourist Attractions** - Of course, any discussion about what makes for a great vacation is bound to be subjective, but this list sounds like it was written by someone who was forced to trudge through Madame Tussaud’s on one too many class field trips.

**Worst Vacation Nightmares** - Most of the holiday misadventures that happened to these folks were the result of natural events (as opposed to bad tour operators). But being misdiagnosed with cancer while on holiday would definitely make it a trip to remember.

**Globetrotting Travel Tips** - Some incredibly common-sense suggestions on travelling near and far—and you may even recognize yourself in the Airport Spot ‘Em list.

**Vacation Destinations of the Forbes 400** - If you’re among the 400 richest people in the world, you’ve probably already got your own travel agency. Otherwise, dream on.

# CLASSIFIEDS

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

## THE VOICE

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