

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE
Vol 21 Issue 15 2013-04-26

Pop! Go the Books

No kids allowed

Northern Voices

Music of Irmelin

Study Duty

Why am I here?

Plus:

*From Where I Sit
Gregor's Bed
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL: WHAT A WASTE

Christina M. Frey



What is the purpose of higher education?

There are a million possible answers, but according to one controversial *Guardian* [article](#), it's crystal clear: Get a (good) job. The author focusses on Ivy League-educated women, but the take-home moral rings suspiciously universal. If you get a degree and don't use it, you might be shirking. In fact, you may even be creating a "wasted opportunity."

What?

Statistics show that the more education you have, the higher your income potential will be. I'm not going to argue with that. I'm not going to dispute that you need higher learning to competently perform in some career fields. I'm especially not going to touch the working woman/stay-at-home mom debate.

Because there's a much, much bigger issue here.

The article author is basing her whole argument on the presumption that the purpose of going to university is to succeed in the job market. I won't necessarily fault her for that, because in a way, she's only reflecting our modern skewed perception of higher education. Jobs now require a university degree when a technical or vocational college would make more sense. A Bachelor's degree suddenly isn't enough, and an increasing number of employers are expecting graduate degrees as well.

Obviously, jobs are important, and to some extent education, particularly in developing countries, is a way out of the poverty cycle. But when we overemphasize the job aspect at the expense of everything else, we lose so much more. What happened to education for enrichment? For the development of one's own mind? For satisfaction of the quest for knowledge? For the love of learning itself? When we only think of higher learning in terms of cash flow, we miss out on its heart and soul.

Is that an elitist point of view? Centuries ago, higher education tended to be limited to the wealthier classes, if only because everyone else was busy surviving. And starving artists throughout history are testimony to the fact that non-practical study doesn't always pay well. But we've taken this way too far in the opposite direction, and it's got scary ramifications for society.

Practicality shouldn't be the driving force behind a decision to pursue higher education. If we completely do away with the idea of a university as a place of learning and knowledge, not job skills training, we start down a slippery slope where subject areas that won't generate big incomes—literary analysis, writing, art, music, and dance, for example—are shoved to the side in favour of more lucrative careers.

Society needs the impracticality of art; it needs the thinkers and dreamers and believers. Going *Dead Poets' Society* on our universities, once a wellspring of new thought and discovery—now that would be a wasted opportunity indeed.

GREGOR'S BED

Wanda Waterman



Photo courtesy of Future You Pictures.

Recent Discoveries from the Realm of the Experimental and the Avant Garde

Film: *Beauty Is Embarrassing*

Director: Neil Berkeley

Genre: Documentary

"When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro."

Hunter S. Thompson

How Bad Parenting Makes Good Artists

Wayne White's dad was a hometown hero in their small Chattanooga neighbourhood back in the '70s —loads of charm, a star athlete, and really popular. But he was deeply ashamed of his long-haired, non-athletic, artistic teenaged son.

He made no secret of his disgust. Every look and every word directed at Wayne spoke of revulsion and disappointment.

Years later, after Wayne had attained a phenomenally successful career as an art director, illustrator, puppeteer,

and artist and had met and married his amazing artist soul-mate and had two artistic children, his father became quite proud of him. Now he brags him up every chance he gets.

A Lingering Shame

But Wayne's character and even his unique aesthetic were formed in response to his father's rejection during a crucial developmental stage in his adolescence. It made him struggle with self-esteem, even during his successful career creating the set for *PeeWee's Playhouse* and later *Beakman's World* and doing art direction for music videos by Peter Gabriel and The Smashing Pumpkins.

If you look at what conditions it takes to nurture a great artist, you'd have to thank Wayne's dad for being such a jerk back in the day. Why? Because a sense of rejection is one of the most powerful tools an artist can own.

Artists like Beethoven, Rilke, Van Gogh, Emily Dickinson, and Sylvia Plath all grew up with a sense of deprivation, a belief that they were unloved and unwanted—whether or not they *were* actually rejected.

I can only speculate as to why rejection drives us to make art. Maybe it's because this rejection makes us want to prove ourselves, or maybe it's because rejection breeds in us the sense of tragedy that compels

us to manufacture alternate worlds. This may doom some artists on a personal level, but their pain becomes our salvation when they morph it into beautiful things that inform culture and inspire us to stretch our hearts and minds.

Southern Fried Creative Stimulation

Wayne's mom was a lot nicer than his dad, but a debilitating car accident that left her with a brain injury threw the family out of kilter for a while and added to Wayne's sense of abandonment. He now attributes his sense of taste to her strange collection of found objects, the kind you often see cluttering front porches on drives along American country roads. Her finds included a very perverse-looking ceramic clown and large wooden letters spelling out witty Southern maxims.

But Is It Really Avant Garde?

Some might argue that a discussion of Wayne White's work has no place in a column about the avant garde. This is because the avant garde is normally expected to be highbrow, art so highfalutin' that ordinary people just don't get it. But the really avant garde thing about White's work is that he throws all that out the window and produces avant garde art that's undeniably lowbrow.

Embracing the Shame

His wonderful statement—"Beauty is Embarrassing"—speaks of the sense of shame we sometimes feel in the presence of beauty as well as the shame the artist feels for devoting his life to trying to produce it. Joyfully embracing shame is what he seems to be doing by running marathons with every creative idea that enters his mind.

His latest stroke of genius is buying up those huge ghastly landscapes one finds at thrift sales and incorporating huge block letter text messages into the picture, messages with art-mocking slogans like "HOT-SHOTS AND KNOW-IT-ALLS," "HE WAS DRUNK AND MAMA WENT AND GOT HIM," and "JUST A PICTURE SHUNNED BY SCHOLARS NOW IT COSTS TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS." He takes pains to make it look like the letters were actually constructed on the landscape (imagine the "Hollywood" sign), sometimes including clever touches like beer cans nestled into the corner to signify a tired workman after a long day of constructing massive letters.

Is It Art?

Jacque Maritain said that in order to be art, a work must be delightful, significant, and rational. Whereas White's work might score low in the rational category, it wins top marks for being delightful and significant.



Photo courtesy of Future You Pictures.

IN CONVERSATION

Wanda Waterman



Photo: Debra Lopez

Jay Nash, Part II

*Jay Nash is a Vermont-based singer-songwriter whose latest album, *Letters from the Lost*, will be released May 14. He recently took the time to answer some of Wanda Waterman's questions about learning music, new funding models, and why he needed to make his latest album in his home studio. You can read the first part of this interview [here](#).*

The Early Education of a Musical Autodidact

Much of Jay's musical education seems to have been driven by obsession.

"When I was between 15 and 16 years old," he says, "I became, quite literally, obsessed with Charlie Parker's solos. And I was getting so far inside those

solos, which were just notes. For him it was stream-of-consciousness, but I was unfurling these changes and these lines that spilled out of him. I kept playing them back very slowly until I was starting to memorize them. They really spoke volumes to me."

It was shortly after this that Jay began thinking of playing guitar and singing as a means of expressing himself with both music and words, of providing melody, musical arrangement, and a story all in one. The rest is history.

The Advantages of Making It at Home

He says that having his own studio was the ideal condition for him as a singer-songwriter and admits that *Letters From the Lost* could never have been produced anywhere but at home.

"The sound of this album was heavily informed by the fact that I had my own creative space in which to explore outside the confines of the clock.

"It was a very different process than any I've experienced before. I would say, *Oh, I've got to write a song about this*, or I would write the song as a stream-of-consciousness, where the melody and lyrics come simultaneously and you sit down and take five minutes to write the song. This is really exciting when it happens."

Paying the Piper

“The making of the record was entirely funded by fans. It’s the second record of mine that I’ve funded this way. I think models like PledgeMusic and Kickstarter are great—they’re making it possible for music to take place that wouldn’t otherwise happen—but my reticence about using those two was simply that I didn’t want that to be the total focus of my interaction with my audience.

“I didn’t want my initial contact with a potential listener to be *Help me make this record!* For some artists this can be exactly the right thing; they’re very interactive and comfortable with sharing every detail of their lives. I don’t mind sharing things with people, but my primary focus is making the music.

“Having said that, I set up my own fan funding arrangement on my website, where I offered five different packages that people could purchase. Then I made a couple of email announcements in which I said, *Hey, I’m making a new record. If you’re curious about being involved, click here.* So I wasn’t shoving it down people’s throats. A casual fan wasn’t going to do it; those who would donate were those who’ve already made my music a big part of their lives.

“As far as putting the album out, functioning as my own label, a lot of that was funded by my previous recordings and the producing I’ve done for other artists. I also produce music for television. I hope that I’ve planted enough seeds to cultivate a sustainable career. All signs point to the belief that I need to keep doing what I’m doing, as long as it’s fun.”

The Next Horizon

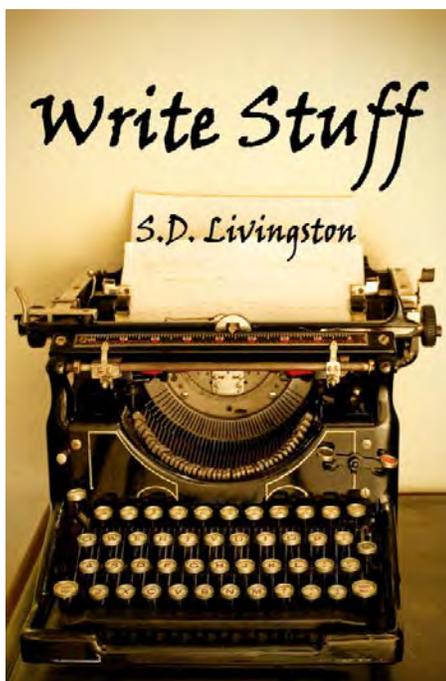
After seven solo records and five EPs Jay’s now thinking of being in a band: “This may be my last solo record,” he speculates.

He’s now touring western Canada with Ivan and Alyosha, performing as a solo act, and they’ve made a good impression on him.

“I’m hoping I can coerce them to join me for a song or two. But after that I’m doing a tour supporting the release of this record, and I’m bringing a drummer along with me—Josh Day, a long-time acquaintance from the time I spent in Los Angeles. He’s an incredible drummer, great singer, great producer, great all-around musician, and a real disciple of Levon Helm of The Band. I’m bringing him out to play 25 or 30 shows with me; I hope that leads us to finding some common musical ground so we can look at starting a band together.”



Photo: Debra Lopez



Pop Go the Pages

Walk into any bookstore and you'll find the books divided into two main sections. One for kids, one for adults. There's some crossover, but in the main they're firmly divided. And there's one kind of book that's especially pigeonholed: pop-up books for toddlers. But moveable books didn't start out being kid-friendly—and they've got a racy 800-year history to prove it.

The official term for creating pop-ups is paper engineering. And the art form is about more than just making paper stand up. As this [talk](#) at the Smithsonian Institute explains, the words “fold, pull, pop, and turn” are a better description of the possibilities.

These three-dimensional creations date back to the 13th century, and some of the first pop-up books were academic works on the subjects of astronomy and anatomy. Even when mass production made books more affordable in Victorian times, authors and publishers didn't automatically turn to children's stories.

Movable books are by nature rather fragile creations and even after the Industrial Revolution would have been more expensive to make than regular books. Only the very rich could have afforded to let their children tear into a handmade pop-up.

Instead, pop-up books were very much intended for adult audiences. In fact, moveable paper items didn't only come in book form. There were moveable postcards and watchpapers as well. As this [example](#) of a dancing Salome on a watchpaper shows, paper engineers often combined racy subject matter with practical items.

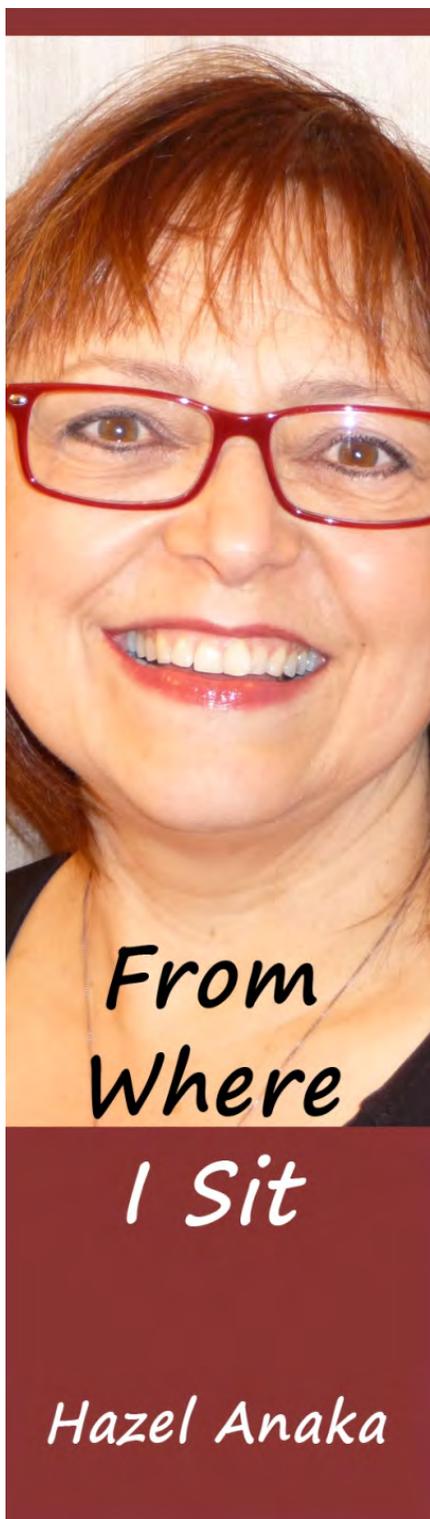
Pop-ups have evolved since then into the bright books we see in the toddler section today, but that doesn't mean kids are the only fans of this art form. One person who follows their interesting history (and current forms) is the [Pop-Up Lady](#), and she's not the only one. There's a [Moveable Book Society](#) in the US, and you can even buy pop-up postage stamps in the Netherlands.

A couple of other pop-up titles reflect the celebrity-crazed culture of today. In 2006, Melcher Media released *The Pop-Up Book of Celebrity Meltdowns* and *The Pop-Up Book of Sex*.

If the world of pop-ups has you fascinated, you can also make your own. There are plenty of how-to videos on YouTube, and the Pop-Up Lady has collected a [few](#) to get you started. For a peek at how a real master does it, Matthew Reinhart lets you look inside several of his own creations, like [this one](#): *Encyclopedia Prehistorica: Sharks and Other Sea Monsters*.

The only question now is, can programmers bring the magic of pop-ups to e-books? Oh, wait. I think there's already an app for that.

S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).



No Better Place

Since late December I've been living and breathing everything, anything Ukrainian. I was challenged by our county's Economic Development Manager to come up with a concept for a new event that the county could get behind and support.

I put all my *pysanky* (eggs) in one basket and presented the idea of a two-day Ukrainian festival. The idea was enthusiastically received and has morphed into the Babas & Borshch Ukrainian Festival.

Our county is the site of the first, oldest, and densest settlement of immigrant Ukrainians in Canada (starting with Ivan Pylypiw in 1891). It continues to be largely Ukrainian in ethnicity and predominantly agricultural in method of livelihood.

In my pitch I said we needed to take a page out of the playbook of the Aboriginals and French Canadians, who work hard to preserve and advance their culture. It's personal, as in some ways I feel I've dropped the ball as a mother. For many years I haven't embraced my own ethnicity with any degree of effort or enthusiasm; nor have I deliberately sought to immerse my kids in our culture. As we get further away from that original wave of immigrants, the work of preservation is harder and the loss of customs and rituals larger. It becomes a case of use it or lose it.

Well, we've committed to using it. Through dozens of meetings and hours upon hours of work behind the scenes, the idea has grown into an incredibly exciting venture.

As the festival's coordinator I am loving every minute of the hard, hard work. I am in my element organizing, planning, and being creative in spirit and anal in detail. The response from everyone I've spoken to or enlisted to help has been positive, including from some highly influential Edmonton groups and resources. I am grateful and humbled by how this idea is coming to life.

Here at home, I'm digging up books, textiles, and objects that we've owned since the '70s and are just now rediscovering have beauty and value. As a newlywed I actually did Ukrainian cross-stitch on various linens. I took Ukrainian 10, 20, and 30 a hundred years ago in high school and still have the textbook. I bought my first Ukrainian blouse yesterday. Now when I work I'll be playing the Ukrainian playlist on my computer instead of the likes of Pachelbel. I bought a flag to add to the mood in my office.

So if you want to experience all things Ukrainian, pencil August 24-25 into your calendars. If *pyrohy* and *borshch* make you salivate, you need to be there. If you love the toe-tapping music and heart-stopping dancing, you need to be there. You need to be there to get your Ukrainian passport, shop at Baba's Bazaar, eat at Baba's Bistro, compete in the Ukrainian Games Triathlon, celebrate at the *Zabava* (party), and visit participating venues all over town. There'll be no better place, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Green Spaces

April's all about the green—for Earth Day, that is. And yet despite our commitment to recycling, sustainability, and environmental preservation, a recent study suggests that fewer Canadians than ever are taking the opportunity to enjoy some of Canada's wide-open green spaces. From national parks to protected forests, there's green everywhere—if you know where to look. These links may help get you started:

The Encyclopedia

Your starting point for any national park visit—whether you're investigating the nearest site, looking for hiking trail information, or researching natural history—is the Parks Canada website. The government-run site contains a wealth of information that will help make your visit a success.

The Artist

Searching for inspiration? For a different look at Canada's national park system, check out the National Parks Project, an interactive multimedia site created to celebrate the system's centennial in 2011. A variety of filmmakers, artists, and musicians visited Canadian national parks and collaborated to create an experience for each park in order to express "the unique essence of the surrounding environment."

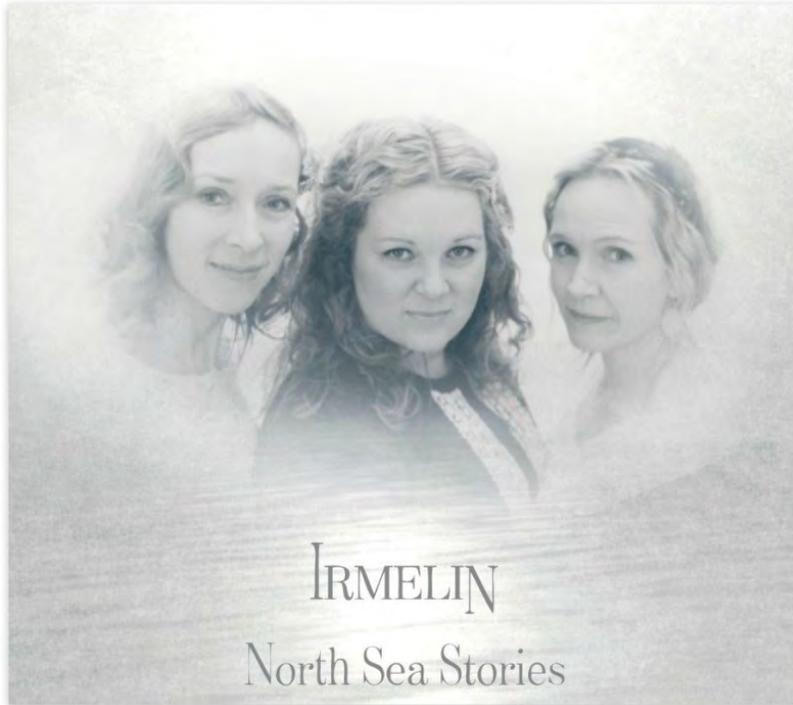
The Astronomer

Sometimes the preservation of nature's not just about the green. Light pollution has affected the way we see the sky, but Canada is home to many protected stargazing areas, often called dark-sky preserves, reserves, or parks. *Canadian Geographic* magazine has the details (and links to some helpful stargazing apps!).



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Album: *North Sea Stories*

Artists: Irmelin (Eva Rune, Karin Ericsson Back, Maria Misgeld)

Genre: Folk, World, *A Cappella*

"I've spent hours and hours doing research into Appalachian folk music. My grandfather was a fiddler. There is something very immediate, very simple and emotional, about that music."

Renee Fleming

A Tender and Exquisite Expression of Northern Folk Consciousness

I'm sure you can remember some *a cappella* harmonies that made you shiver—the Roche Sisters' rendition of the "Hallelujah Chorus," for example, or Sweet Honey in the Rock singing "Bring Me a Little Water, Sylvie." Here's another listening experience to leave the mouth ajar.

These three lovely Swedish ladies sing a carefully chosen set of old and new Northern folk tunes, entirely a cappella, producing the most exquisite sounds in the most beautiful arrangements imaginable. They're not just pitch perfect and in perfect step with each other, there's an incredible synergy—sparks fly at frequent junctures in the music. And their accents are delightful.

There are a number of songs in Swedish and Finnish that are total ear candy even if you don't understand the languages, but Anglophones will be delighted to hear a number of folk songs from the British Isles, including more modern repertoire. Ewan MacColl's "The Moving On Song," a moving tribute to the rejection experienced by Irish travellers, and "Follow the Heron Home" by Scottish singer-songwriter Karine Polwart are stunning examples that have been given beautifully sensitive interpretations by Irmelin.

Another delightful experience is hearing "kulning"—polyphonic Swedish herding calls. All three members of Irmelin are music instructors who teach kulning and diddling (mouth music). On "Ackjag som många andra" you'll even hear "bent" notes, slightly dissonant flattened tones like blues notes, but different.

For a Northerner, it's a helpful experience to be permitted for a spell to look away from the North as the seat of imperialism and oppression and to appreciate the beauty of folk traditions testifying to the universal solidarity of old things, the marginalized, the rejected, the simple, and the homely. *North Sea Stories* sheds a bright noonday light on what unites us all as human beings.

The icing? You can hear the whole album [here](#) on Spotify for free. Enjoy.

North Sea Stories manifests seven of the Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 3) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 4) it is about attainment of the true self; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 7) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

"I mean, the genuine roots of culture is folk music."

Johnny Rotten

DID YOU KNOW?

Student of Fortune



Have a question you need answered? Confused about that mathematical concept and need some one-on-one help? Lost, stuck, or unable to wait for formal help via your course tutor?

Student of Fortune may have your answers—literally.

The online service pairs up students and would-be tutors without a formalized arrangement like many tutoring organizations require. The site itself is free to use and browse, though tutors are paid for their tutorial work.

Start out by submitting a question, and tutors will respond by creating and offering personalized tutorials to help meet your needs. The website will allow you to preview the tutorials, view tutor ratings, and more; you can then choose to purchase a tutorial through the website (the money goes to the tutors).

Anyone can join as a student or a tutor. If you've got an area that's been confusing you, or you're a subject matter expert and want to earn a few bucks helping other students, check out Student of Fortune to get the learning journey started.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Go Out on the Green

Earth Day has come and gone, but there's still plenty of work to do—and not just on the recycling front. A recent international study shows that fewer Canadians than ever are making time with nature a priority, even though they're quick to acknowledge its importance.

As *The Toronto Star* [reports](#), more than 90 per cent of the study's respondents—from nine countries, including Canada, the US, and Russia—believe that “forests, parks and gardens have a positive effect on quality of life, with 89 per cent going so far as to call them a human right.”

And yet Canadian respondents are spending less time outdoors in green spaces, with “36 per cent [saying] the time they spend in forests has decreased during the last five years” (29 per cent have spent less time in urban parks).

Additionally, a shocking 79 per cent of Canadian parents surveyed admit that their children are spending less time in forests, green spaces, and local parks “than they did as youngsters.”

The reason? Most respondents cited “distance from a park or forest” and “limited time due to workload” as the reason for the drop. Some observers, though, are suggesting it's today's entertainment culture that's led Canadians to value city amusements over time spent outdoors.

Around the World: No Way, Cousin

That hot guy at the club might just be a close relative—if you're in Iceland, that is. The small country's population of 320,000 means that everyone shares some kind of familial connection, but some are further removed than others. Now, though, Icelanders don't need to worry about accidentally getting cozy with their cousins—there's (actually) an app for that.

As *News of Iceland* [reports](#), the new app “prevents Icelanders from sleeping with their relatives.”

The app, whose tagline is “Bump the app before you bump in bed,” draws on Iceland's online registry, which “holds information about the families of about 720,000 individuals who were born in Iceland at some point in time.”

Although the registry is freely available online to all registered persons, the app makes the information available at the touch of the finger—or the bump of a phone. Users can bump phones together when they meet, and the app will “instantly” show them “if they are too related to take things any further.”

As one user commented on the app's website, “If I would have had this app last year I probably wouldn't have gone home with my cousin.”

AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. *The Voice* does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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