

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE
Vol 23 Issue 03 2015-01-16

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

A Goal Too Far

Does the End Justify Missing the Means?

Rusty's Gift

In Sickness and in Health

Plus:

*Council Connection
Maghreb Voices
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



To S.D. Livingston;

Thank you so much for the article **Buyer Beware**. During porting my phone from Fido to Rogers my number became a victim of this scam. Keep up the good work.

Take care,
Sonny.

Sorry to hear it hit you, Sonny. -Karl

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

Karl Low

**The Bear in the Room**

It's been quite a week for layoffs. In case you haven't heard, Target has given a surprise announcement that they'll be closing all their stores across Canada. Every single one. That means over 17,000 people are losing their jobs and will be talking to Employment Insurance Canada. On the same day, Sony announced that it would also be closing all 14 of its stores in Canada.

Yesterday, Schlumberger, one of the largest oilfield services providers, announced that it would be cutting some 9,000 jobs over the course of the year. In addition to that, we have Suncor laying off 1000, Shell Canada laying off 300, Apache Corp with 250, EOG Resources laying off 150 in Canada, and Enbridge laying off 100 in Canada, among others. If you're keeping track, that's almost 30,000 jobs. The population of Athabasca, for reference, wasn't quite 3,000 at the last census. So ten Athabascas worth.

The federal government, after first announcing that they'd have a slim surplus when oil was \$80/barrel, and so could start bringing in income splitting tax credits (can anybody tell me why a single parent who has to send the kids to daycare should get less of a tax break than a couple making the same amount if one parent can stay home and take care of the kids?) followed this up with an announcement, as oil was hitting \$50/barrel, that although the low price of oil would certainly affect revenues, the budget would still have a surplus and be able to enact their promised tax reductions. Since then, the government has decided that they're not going to produce a budget until after the end of the current financial year.

In Alberta, things are even worse. Even our Premier has announced that Alberta's economy is not diversified enough, and will be suffering a significant slow-down as a result of the lower prices, though he rejected the assertion from one financial group that Alberta would see a recession.

What this means for Athabasca University is a mixed bag. While currently the rumours are that the province will provide a 0% funding increase, the Alberta government has announced that there will be a consultation with Albertans as to how to address the shortfall. If Albertans indicate, as usual, that they would prefer to cut government services as opposed to switching to a progressive tax system or paying any sort of sales tax, that rumor could quickly turn into another funding cut. At the same time, as in any slowdown, AU can probably expect its enrolments to increase as people look to upgrade their skills to get a better job, or have to turn to student finance in order to survive. When we consider that the cost of tuition doesn't pay the cost of the education provided, this could turn into a one-two punch that brings AU to its knees trying to provide quality service to us as students.

Hopefully our student unions are already putting together a plan to help remind the public of the various benefits that post-secondary education brings—not just to the students, but to the rest of the province. Our post-secondary institutions, especially AU, which doesn't receive any provincial funding for non-Albertan students, would be hard pressed to survive having its services stretched any further.

In the meantime, however, we have a great issue this week. From a new interview with a student in Vancouver, to Barbara Godin's rather heartbreaking story "Rusty's Gift", you shouldn't have any trouble finding something in this week's issue to take your mind off the bears ravaging our economy.

Enjoy the read!

MINDS WE MEET



Jess Price is an AU student from Vancouver BC. She's currently enrolled in AU's Human Resources and Labour Relation program.

Jess was recently interviewed by The Voice Magazine about school, culture, and archery.

Describe the path that led you to AU. What was it that made you realize you wanted to go back to school, and what pushed you into the program you've signed up for?

I had originally enrolled in a local university, but I realized that structure would just prolong my studies and make it less enjoyable. I was researching online studies and found AU. It looked good, so I signed up. Although I can work at my own pace, I find I usually move through the courses more quickly than I would at a traditional university.

What do you do like to do when you're not studying?

Mostly I like to read. I also like to hang out with my friends and family. And I'm involved in archery. I watch hockey, too; I follow both the Vancouver Canucks and the Montreal Canadiens.

Archery sounds interesting. How did that come about?

I started archery back in 10th grade so I've been doing it for about 5 years now. I struggled with holding the arrow and bow for a while, but once I got a grasp of it the sport seem so natural to me. There's this weird rush of excitement to let go and watch the arrow fly across air. During those weeks of archery, I found how quickly I could learn the sport and do well with it. After high school, I decided to continue on with it as a way to relax and to take a break from studying (plus, it's pretty fun to pin a picture of your textbook on the target and start shooting!) I don't go to competitions because archery is more of a recreational hobby for me. I don't think my skills can match up with others!

What are your plans for this education once you finish? How does it fit in with where you want to go?

I really want to get into the HR field. I'm in a 3-year program, and I plan to move to Alberta when I'm done and find something in my field there.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

I would have to say my sixth-grade teacher. He used to be a security guard and he had such a love of teaching. He knew just how to encourage students and to stop them from being discouraged by one set-back. "It's just a grade," he'd say.

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

I know this is going to sound a bit weird, but I'd like to have lunch with Adolph Hitler. I've started reading about the holocaust, and I'm also interested in history and World War II. I believe he—initially—did a lot for Germany, and he was a great speaker. I'd like to see those events in action, to see how he became successful and how he could motivate people. It would be interesting to follow the trajectory of his career and see how and why he became the person he did later on.

Describe your experience with online learning so far. What do you like? Dislike?

I had had some experience with taking courses online in high school. One thing I like is that I can take courses in my pyjamas if I want! And I don't have to go anywhere when it's cold or snowing out. What I don't like is a lot of e-reading. I find in general that the material in an online course is a bit dry—you don't get the vibrancy of in-class discussion.

When was the point where you wavered the most about whether it was worth it to continue your schooling, and what made you decide to keep going?

After going to a local university I took a year off to contemplate my direction. In the end, though, I wanted to work in Human Resources and you can't get an HR job without a degree. It's a financial commitment but I view it as an investment.

What's your most memorable AU course so far, and why?

It was definitely *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, ANTH 275. I find it interesting to learn about diverse cultures. And there definitely is tremendous diversity. This course gave me insight into other cultures and that's had a profound effect on my outlook.

Describe the proudest moment in your life.

It would be either finishing a semester in 1 ½ months, or graduating from high school. I'm young, so I'm still carving my own path. At 21, I feel I haven't done anything amazing yet, so I hope those moments are still to come.

What have you given up to go to AU that you regret the most? Was it worth it?

Mainly I've given up university life: the social aspect of campus life, talking with other students, and the face-to-face relationship with professors. I also miss the rhythms of a traditional school year, with defined spring and fall semesters.

If you were the new president of AU, what would be your first project?

That's an interesting question. I think I'd work on stressing the quality of online education, while highlighting how it differs from traditional education. I think we need to change the way people view online university.

If you were trapped on an island, what three things would you bring?

Can I get a signal on this island? If so, I'd definitely bring my cell phone! Also, I'd bring a good book, and my dog. (My dog's name is Summer and she's about 10 years old now. She's a Maltipoo, a Maltese and a Poodle mix. I adopted her from an animal shelter and they told me she came from an abusive home.)

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.

Aside from having archery as a hobby? I think it's that I'm a bookworm. On average, I read one to two novels a week, on top of my course reading. My capacity for reading is good for online study, too, because there is a lot more reading with online courses.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

There's a saying that goes, "fall seven times, but stand up eight." That's my philosophy. Don't give up and always try again.

What do you think about e-texts?

E-reading a novel isn't much different than a regular book. I do read some books on my iPad. However, for textbooks I prefer printed material. I think printed books allow more flexible notations and promote better understanding of the material.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

So far, all my contact with tutors has gone really well. Most of them seem to mark assignments quickly. Occasionally, though, one of them will take one or two weeks to get back to me on something. But overall, it's been good.

Where has life taken you so far?

From here in Vancouver, it's easy to get to Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington, so I visit those places. I've also been to China a few times. My brother does business there, so I go with him. I find the culture fascinating because it's so different from here. I'm Chinese, but I've lived my whole life in Vancouver so I feel a bit removed from the culture.

What (non-AU) book are you reading now?

I'm reading *Prisoner of Tehran* by Marina Nemat. She's a Canadian author, having moved to Canada after escaping Iran. The whole Middle East is a touchy subject today. Reading it assists in my cultural studies, because the book is the personal experiences of someone growing up there, rather than an outsider looking in.

DID YOU KNOW?

2014 TUITION, EDUCATION AND TEXTBOOK AMOUNTS CERTIFICATE



Update from Athabasca University Financial Services...

Athabasca University Financial Services is pleased to announce that the official 2014 Tuition, Education and Textbook Tax Credit Certificate (T2202A) forms will be available on-line by the end of February to all eligible students. The forms will not be mailed out and instead are on-line in printable format for all students to access. Please visit AU's web site at www.athabascau.ca for further details on obtaining your tuition and education and textbook tax credit information for your 2014 tax return. You can go to 'Questions? Ask AU' under Contact menu bar at the left side of AU web site and enter "What is a T2202A" in the search box.

A Goal Too Far

Deanna Roney



Recently there was a post on the Athabasca University Facebook page questioning the graduation policies—specifically, when the course work needed to be completed in order to participate in the convocation ceremonies in June. (That would be the first week of May according to the AU website.) As a distance education student I am sure the logistics of attending convocation is something we have all considered. In traditional schools you participate with your fellow peers who you have gone to school with for the last, typically, four years. You are already on location so have no travel cost, or accommodation costs, and you walk through convocation shortly after completing your final exam and/or assignment.

Since adding a minor to my degree I have been re-working my personal study schedule (a wonderful procrastination tool.) I am trying to schedule my courses and time into something that will challenge me, and yet remain feasible. I am making a conscious effort to keep in mind that things can always change, that life happens, which can delay finishing a course, or a course load might not lend itself to the strict schedule. I have come up with what, I believe, is a sensible plan: two courses every two months. If I am able to stick to this plan that means I would be squeaking in under the line for graduation ceremonies in June 2016. Oh, except for the four extra courses that do not fit into that time frame that I figure I can just sneak in somewhere along the line. But, that is still do-able, right?

Having a goal is important. Having a realistic goal is possibly more important. After setting this deadline for myself I have gotten lots accomplished; I wonder, though, at what point am I sacrificing my quality of education for the completion of my education by trying to speed through a course and potentially not getting everything from it that I should be? I think something that can get lost in this process—and hopefully it is not just me—is what we all started this for. I did not begin this journey with the sole goal of being finished as soon as possible. Rather, I started because I wanted to learn. This idea of attending convocation, being able to celebrate an end to all of my hard work and the beginning of something new, motivates me to stay focused on my work. I just need to remind myself to not lose sight of what is most important in this process, and that is, of course, my quality of education.

Students always have the option of participating in convocation the following June if they do not make the deadline. If I completed my degree in October 2016 – would convocation ceremonies have the same impact that many months later? On the same Facebook post I mentioned earlier there was a student who did just that; they commented that even though so much time had passed the excitement all came flooding back when they stepped out onto that stage. A bonus to completing months before-hand would be not worrying about missing the deadline by a day or two and having to wait a year, or rushing to cram in the last few units to try and finish on time; potentially sacrificing not only your sanity but also your GPA. I try to keep this in mind; that if I do not make my goal it does not mean I will not get to participate, so if I need to take some extra time on a course or assignment, or just cannot fit those four extra courses into my schedule, it is not the end of the world. It simply means I will wait a little longer, and possibly milk my last few courses for all they are worth. While it is great to have a goal—I am not so sure I am in a hurry to leave AU.

We need to have goals to work toward and setting deadlines for ourselves can present an extra dose of motivation. However, one great thing about our school is that it is flexible. I think it is important to remember this and remain diligent and flexible with our own self-imposed deadlines. We are all undertaking a great task, we need to learn to cut ourselves some slack now and then—at least I know I do.

Deanna Roney is an AU student who loves adventure in life and literature.



Keeping it Short

Barabara Lehtiniemi



Whatever happened to the art of writing shorthand? Has it gone the way of the adding machine, hand-sewn clothes, and film cameras?

When I attended high school a million years ago, shorthand was offered as a full-credit course. (I should also mention that there was a full-credit course in using adding machines—now known as desktop calculators—as well as courses in what was called "home economics," which covered sewing and basic cooking.)

Shorthand, for those too young to know or too old to remember, is a method of writing that uses symbols or abbreviations in place of letters, words, or phrases. The idea is that often-used words or common letter combinations can be replaced with a single symbol. Further, in traditional shorthand a quick-to-write symbol replaces each letter of the alphabet, eliminating unnecessary pen strokes.

Such rapid writing was once commonly used by secretaries, court reporters, and journalists. These rapid notes were temporary aids to be later transcribed in full.

Shorthand has been around for centuries. It dates back at least to the 4th century BC in Ancient Greece. Various forms were devised over the years and continued to be developed right into the 20th century. When I attended high school, the Pitman system of shorthand—already 100 years old—was taught; it was later supplanted by the Gregg system. I learned neither because I opted for the adding machine course.

Computers have largely eliminated the need for shorthand and today there are few, if any, high schools which have shorthand on the curriculum. Secretaries (who are seldom called secretaries these days) no longer take dictation because many executives tap out their correspondence on their own computer. Those who don't type their own use a voice recorder to dictate letters. Similarly, journalists now use voice recorders in most situations. Although reviewing a taped interview takes longer than reviewing shorthand notes, the saved recording protects journalists from accusations of misquoting, an occupational hazard and potential legal tussle.

For myself, there are still times when I have to take notes quickly and by hand: lectures, both educational and cultural; meetings in which the task of minute-taking falls to me; and telephone interviews when I'm trying to get accurate and timely information for an article.

In the struggle of trying to simultaneously listen and write, often neither gets done well. Then I strain later to read my hastily scrawled notes and make sense out of what I wrote and what I remember hearing.

Shorthand would surely be a boon in these situations, and others. Taking notes during or immediately following a legal or medical consultation, for example, instead of struggling later to remember the advice and instructions.

In my recent attempts to learn shorthand, however, I found myself thwarted. Shorthand has fallen so far out of fashion, there is little information available. My local library has not one book on any method. An inter-library loan search of public libraries across Ontario turned up a few crusty copies of Pitman shorthand and a smattering of others—and this is to serve a province of over 13 million. Book retailers are similarly under-stocked. Even the AU Library is bereft of rapid writing texts.

In a sort of stenographic tyranny of the majority, the fact that most people don't use shorthand most of the time is hampering some people from using it some of the time. I am encouraged—slightly—by this 2014 [article](#) in *The Atlantic*, in which a journalist describes how he still uses Gregg shorthand (even though he also has a Sky wifi smartpen, a James Bond-quality piece which is also a voice recorder and a camera.)

Could be it that shorthand has reached the end of its 2500-year run? Or will it languish into near-extinction only to enjoy a resurgence, like knitting. I'm encouraged by the ongoing availability of steno pads, those spiral-bound notebooks with the vertical line down the centre. That vertical line? It exists only for shorthand.

Next week's article takes a look at two disparate forms of shorthand: one a traditional slashes and squiggles type, and the other a modern system of abbreviation.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario



Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.

AUSU Student Forums

Sujatha posts an inquiry about the ORGB 364 course syllabus. Linza seeks students' input on CMIS 455.

AthaU Facebook Group

Dawn seeks help with the definition of an Old Norse term for HIST 383, *The Vikings*. Kathleen wonders about the advisability of enrolling in several courses then finishing them one at a time.

Other postings include e-texts, timelines for the return of assignment marks, and courses APST 215, ENGL 401, ENSC 200 and PSYC 289.

Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweeted a link to the Communications Officer job posting: ow.ly/Hgyyu. In a separate tweet, [@AthabascaU](#) quotes Confucius: "It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop".



Rusty's Gift

Barbara Godin



Every Sunday morning, without fail, my husband and I drove to our local Humane Society and walked the dogs. I walked the small ones and Ed walked the larger ones. Some days all the cages were full and other days there would be only one or two lonely, scraggly little dogs. Little did I know that one Sunday morning my life would be changed forever.

It was Labor Day weekend and, after we completed walking the dogs and were ready to go home, one of the staff members came rushing towards us. "Barb, I have to ask you guys a big favor. I have a little pup that someone dropped off and it's too young to leave at the shelter overnight, and tomorrow is a holiday so we'll only

be coming in briefly to feed and clean cages. Would you and Ed be able to shelter this pup for a few days?" I looked at Ed and we both agreed. She ran to the back and brought out the cutest little blonde pup I had ever seen. I held her while Michelle handed Ed the food along with a bed and blanket. We headed home with the hope that our dog and cat would accept this pup without too much chaos; they did readily.

As we arrived home we soon discovered the pup was covered in fleas! Also, when I took her out to pee I thought she had eaten spaghetti, as long white strings were exiting her back end, but on a closer look I realized she was infested with worms. I was almost sick to my stomach. This poor little pup. And there was nothing we could do until Tuesday, as no one was at the shelter. We tried unsuccessfully to keep the pup away from our pets, but they were all too curious. Fleas were everywhere! I thought, "Well it's only a couple of days. We'll get through this." Unfortunately, overnight the pup started vomiting and having bloody diarrhea. Oh my goodness, what else can happen!

We had no choice but to bring her into the emergency clinic. She was diagnosed with the parvo virus, which they explained was a very serious, life-threatening condition, and she needed to be started on IV fluids immediately. The next day we called the Humane Society and told them the situation. Michelle asked if we could bring her back as they couldn't afford to keep her at the clinic and they would be able to hydrate her at the shelter. When we went to the clinic to pick her up, they advised us not to take her out, as she needed to stay there because the shelter did not have the proper equipment and she may become seriously dehydrated. I looked at my husband; our hearts were breaking for this poor little abandoned pup. We decided we would leave her there and ultimately be responsible for the vet bill.

When we arrived the next day, she looked much better and we decided to return her to the shelter. Ed and I knew we were getting attached to this sick little girl. We brought her back to the Humane Society where they put her in an isolation cage as she was contagious. Michelle told us we could visit her whenever we wanted. Consequently, we visited her daily—for a week. Each day as she was getting stronger we were becoming more attached. One day Michelle told us they would be able to put her up for adoption soon. My heart sank! I was so drawn to this little girl, and I knew Ed was too. We went home and discussed what to do.

The next day we arrived at the shelter to pick up the new addition to our family. "Rusty" was a sweet, wild, crazy pup, who overcame many challenges. After surviving the life threatening parvo virus, Rusty developed an

ongoing vaginal infection, then a dislocated knee cap for which she needed surgery, and then mange, a skin condition that requires dips into a disinfecting solution once a week for six weeks. And this all occurred within the first year of her life. Ed and I began to believe she was invincible.

Throughout our years with Rusty, she became an irreplaceable member of our family. She knew our routines and could read our emotions by body language or tone of voice. She was a constant companion to both of us, but gravitated more to Ed. When Ed was diagnosed with terminal cancer, Rusty must have sensed it. She stayed by Ed's side as he became sicker and sicker from the chemo and radiation treatments. So much of our focus had been on Ed's illness that we overlooked a growing weakness in Rusty until, one day, she could not stand up. We rushed her to the vet to hear the unfortunate news that Rusty had cancer of the spleen and would most likely die within weeks. The vet recommended we put her down, as she would suffer tremendously with this fast growing cancer.

Ed and I discussed it, and we knew we did not want Rusty to suffer any longer. We told the vet our decision and he prepared a room so Ed and I could be with Rusty during her final moments. I could feel anxiety rising within myself as I had never been with anyone at the time of death. Throughout my childhood, my dogs just disappeared when they became ill or old. Regrettably, I was not able to be with my parents as they passed.

We entered the room and Rusty was lying on a big pillow, looking very peaceful, an IV was in her front leg. The vet told us when the injection would take place and when she would pass. Two small yelps and then Rusty was gone. Ed and I welled up with tears. As we looked at each other little did we know that this was Rusty's last gift to us. Six months later, as I held my husband's hand, I appreciated the gift Rusty had given me. In some small way Rusty had helped me to say good-bye to my husband and accept my unavoidable destiny.



The Smiling Ghosts of Mides, Part I

"Individually, every grain of sand brushing against my hands represents a story, an experience, and a block for me to build upon for the next generation. I quietly thank this ancestor of mine for surviving the trip so that I could one day return."

- Raquel Cepeda

We're driving through the Dorsal, which is part of the Atlas Mountains that mark off the Maghreb region (comprising Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) from the rest of the African continent. Most of southern Tunisia is a combination of semi-arid land and desert, in contrast to the much greener north.

You have to drive for a stretch into the Sahara to get to the mountain oasis of Mides in southwestern Tunisia. The drive itself is formidably beautiful: imagine the mountainous landscape of some distant planet—rolling masses of stratified rock with hardly a trace of vegetation to hide the sensual folds, the sweeping vistas of sand, the yawning canyons.

At the end of the last Ice Age, the Sahara Desert was much like it is now, but it did experience a few thousand years of almost rainforest-like conditions. This is when humans started quitting the overpopulated Nile Valley to settle in the north. Mides is one such settlement. It was given its name by ancient Roman colonisers who called it Madés, but the village existed long before the Romans came along.

With neither a wealthy infrastructure to support tourism in the area or sufficient defense resources to adequately guard tourists against the terrorist threats that plague the region, tourist services here in Mides are limited to a small cluster of palm huts with crudely handmade signs. It's a tourist goldmine, but so out of the way and hard to get to that solitary poetic types can bask in it without having to elbow the crowds.

We enter Mides and find several huts and booths advertising henna tattoos, green tea, and coffee. There are men here, young and old, who spend their days looking for the very things we tourists covet but don't have the time to go after, like fossils, petrified wood, and desert roses.



There's a large gorge here that, in addition to having been used for the desert scenes in *The English Patient*, was used as a defence in earlier years. It looks like rather a dangerous place for children to play.

The village itself looks a lot like the abandoned Pueblo dwellings of the American Southwest, and had a similar history of lush beginnings that eventually turned to arid inhabitability. Mides was once part of a lush area that eventually desertified, reducing the village to an oasis. People continued to live there until 1969, when 22 days of rain washed away most of the houses.

We are accompanied by a young man, who I'm told is our guide, but who remains silent until we reach the summit of the mountain, where he pulls (I'm the only Westerner in the group) me from the herd to show me a display of necklaces, something one might consider out-of-place here but which somehow seems perfectly apt, if only because the necklaces displayed, unlike the vast bulk of Chinese-manufactured products, are handcrafted from real stones and pure metals.

He draws my attention to a silver pendant with an intriguing pendant, explaining that he'd bought it across the border in Algeria and that it's a Tuareg symbol.

Being completely infatuated with all things Tuareg, I buy it on the spot, for the equivalent of 12 Canadian dollars. My Arab friends tell me I paid too much, but my rule is always to pay the same or less than what I'd pay for a similar item in Canada, and not to worry too much about the paleface premium.

(to be continued)



In Conversation With Mehmet Polate, Part I

Wanda Waterman



spiritual path.

*Mehmet Polate is a Turkish master of the oud (the Arabic lute), a musician noted for having developed new techniques in his playing and for mixing different musical traditions (Turkish, Arabic, Azerbaijan, Persian, Indian, Flamenco, and Jazz, to name a few) in his compositions. Along with the Mehmet Polate Trio (with Sinan Arat playing ney and Zoumana Diarra playing kora) he's just released the album *Next Spring* (see the [Voice review here](#)). He recently took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about his early years, his musical education, and his*

Village Playground

I'm content with my childhood; I grew up in a village with lots of space for a playground. Until I reached puberty there was no television, so we grew up with my mother's story-telling nights and my father's musical nights.

The Ideal Oud

Luthiers must find a fine balance between bass, mid, and high frequencies, and so an ideal *oud* for me is still a bit of challenge because the kind of *oud* I developed—with two extra bass strings—is very new. I'm content with my instrument but we're searching for new developments to enhance the color and playfulness of it.

Where Do You Get Your Serenity?

I was born with it, according to my mother. As a baby I had two grey hairs and I barely cried for food or anything else. As a child also I was very peaceful, making my own toys and having fun by myself when there were no kids around.

Maybe that was the reason I switched to the *oud* when I discovered it at the age of 16. I loved the *oud*'s deep and spiritual sound, and I devoted my youthful years to learning it, so my character grew under the influence of the *oud*'s sound and the culture behind it.

A Spiritually Synergistic Trio

We three have a spiritual background; me and Sinan have backgrounds in Alevi Sufism, and Zoumana comes from the family of Griots: he's also a master of reiki and natural medicines, and he makes his own koras and balafons at home here.

They're both masters of their instruments, but also very humble people. This brings a deeper sense of internalizing the music we play and translating it via our instruments and the cultures we're into.

But it's not only that. I bring my compositions to my friends to develop them together, and there's lots of space for all of us to play freely. Also they have some good challenges rhythmically and melodically, which keeps the music lively and playful.

Finding a Balance

Concerning my musical career, the trick is finding the fine balance between technical work and management and artistic work. And also living in a big city, far from my roots, brings me lots of challenges. But I'm doing my best to turn these things into advantages, especially by learning new cultures and expanding the range of the influences in my music by living in Western Europe.

Learning From the Best

The one who had the most influence on me was my music teacher Fethi Cönk from Istanbul. He was a retired music teacher with many experiences with music and life in general, so I learned many things from him.

For three or four years we ran an instrument shop together. It wasn't busy, so I was able to practice my *oud* there every day from ten in the morning until midnight, catching the last bus home. These years with him were in a way my golden years— for my motivation, concentration, and artistic ambitions.

About Alevi Sufism

Alevi Sufism is a kind of spiritualism with Islamic values and influences from the previous religions and cultures from Anatolia and surrounding countries (with small differences). It has a wider concept of life and an artistic way of remaining in it.

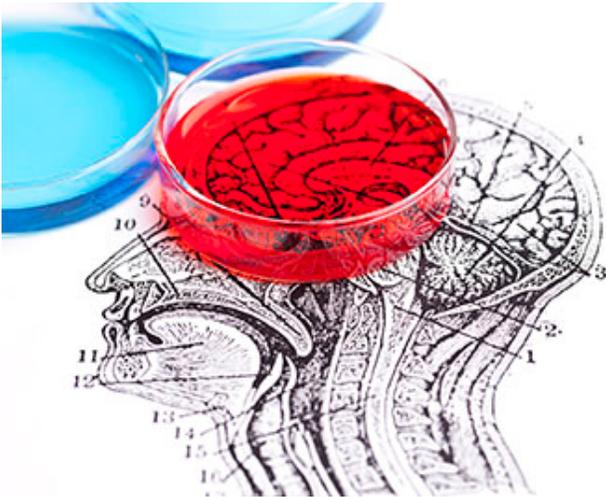
Alevi Sufism has survived with an oral tradition, the essences and messages of which were written in poetry. It was also sung with instruments and danced to. Of course there are hundreds of books and articles about it to read, but I was born into it; my first meeting with poetry, music, and dance was in these Alevi rituals and ceremonies.

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.

Primal Numbers

Knowing Me, Knowing You

S.D. Livingston



In the movie *Her*, a lonely man named Theodore Twombly falls in love with his operating system. The digital personality seems to know Theodore better than the humans around him do. Farfetched? Not according to a new study that claims our computers can judge our character more accurately than friends and family can.

As *The Guardian* [reports](#), researchers at Cambridge and Stanford University studied the Facebook "likes" of more than 86,000 people. Based on those likes, a software program analysed several traits, such as openness and neuroticism, and predicted a user's character and personality. After analysing

just 10 likes, the computer was able to describe someone's personality more accurately than their co-workers could (the human evaluators in the study filled out a similar quiz about the participants).

After analyzing 70 likes, the computer proved it "knew" participants better than their close friends did. And after 150 likes, the digital people-watcher even "out-performed a parent or sibling."

It's an intriguing notion, this idea that computers can form an intimate portrait of our likes and dislikes, our beliefs and desires. The results of a digital profile can be helpful, of course. It might track a change in someone's online behaviour and predict a heightened risk of depression. It could make broad, general connections, such as linking people with groups or hobbies their friends enjoy.

Beyond that, though, the quirks of human nature can't be decoded so easily. Here's a brief experiment you can try. Take a few minutes and scroll through your Facebook feed (or other social media sites) and think about the last 10 or 20 times you "liked" something.

Sometimes, we click that thumbs-up button simply because we enjoyed the message or photo someone posted. Other times, it's a bit more complicated. Maybe it's a friend or family member you haven't seen in a while. You don't really care about their homemade jam or hobby car, but you want to be encouraging. Clicking "like" is a way of keeping that connection going. A way of saying you're thinking of them, that you miss them, that you're part of their life no matter how far the distance.

Or perhaps you like something because you're being playful or ironic. Your friends know you'd rather watch *The Sopranos* than *Murder, She Wrote*, and they get the wry humour when you give the thumbs up to their post about joining the Jessica Fletcher fan club.

And then there are the times when hitting the "like" button can present a social quandry. When someone posts sad news, liking it implies that you're sympathizing with them. But it always feels a bit awkward to give a sign of approval when someone posts that their great-aunt Bessie's in the hospital with pneumonia. How would a computer interpret that situation?

Given that fictional mix, a digital personality test would probably assume that your interests are an eclectic blend of 1960s muscle cars, cozy British mysteries, and respiratory problems. There's no telling what results an algorithm would come up with after throwing those random elements, and more, into a computerized stew.

Can computers look for patterns and come up with likely conclusions? Of course. That's one of the things they're especially good at. But when it comes to deciphering the incredibly diverse and complex depths of the human personality, there's a lot more to like than what a computer can tell us.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to know not just how to write a dissertation upon your acceptance into graduate studies, but also how to apply the principles to your undergraduate essay writings in the meantime.

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

The third part of the critical thinking Study Dude series is being interrupted for a two (err, maybe three) part series on a book dealing with dissertations: *The Dissertation Journey* by Carol M. Roberts. This book is indispensable for anyone with plans to venture into graduate studies and should be mandated as required reading. It will surely streamline your thesis dissertation into a polished product from the outset.

Advice on Passive Versus Active Voice and Prepositions (p. 116)

Want a simple way to edit your essays to strengthen the use of active voice? When I was in graduate studies, my use of passive voice was way overdone. I had a supervisor who harped on me repetitively to turn all incidences of the passive voice into the active voice, although he, as positive as he may be, never clearly defined what the active voice entailed. Further to this, the advice to eliminate all incidences of the passive voice wasn't even the most beneficial; sometimes the passive voice is better.

Yet you can really strengthen your writing by incorporating some simple tips to recognize the passive voice and rewrite as many of them as you possibly can. Carol M. Roberts' (2010) book *The Dissertation Journey* is perhaps the most highly rated on Amazon.com for effective dissertation writing tips, and her discussion on passive versus active voice in addition to prepositional over-usage is at least as remarkable as the rest of her content. After reading her section on active/passive voice, for the first time, I understand—and I want all of you to understand, too:

- Circle your prepositions (words like "on", "of", "above", "with") in each sentence. If you have five or more in a sentence, then rewrite the sentence with stronger verbs to eliminate the prepositional frequency.
- Whenever you see any variant of "to be" (which includes "was", "is", "were", "been", "being", "am", "will be", etc.) in addition to variants of "to have" (which include "has", "have", "had", "has had", etc.) circle those little tyrants—and eliminate 3/4 of them from the page. They almost always (if I'm correct) implicate the passive voice. If that same sentence contains the word "by" in it, or if you could add the word "by" at the end of it, such as "the book was read by me" or "the book was read", you know that the "me" needs to be placed as the subject at the beginning of the sentence to make it active. Another occurrence is when you see a passive verb (the "to be" or "to have" variant) placed beside a verb that could be truncated into a stronger more succinct verb. For example, "I was hesitant to eat the sushi," could be shortened to "I hesitated to eat the sushi." Here the subject is in the right place, but the passive voice arises with the weak verb combination. Once changed, it becomes the active voice.
- Sometimes the passive voice is correct, such as when you want to de-emphasize the writer or place the onus of responsibility on no-one in particular. For example "The people were led to the wrong conclusion" has no-one in particular named as the one(s) who did the leading. It is also used when the subject is not known or inconsequential.

(Roberts, 2010)

Literature Review Tips (p. 107)

When the Study Dude ventured into writing the literature review, there was little to no guidance on how to go about it—just criticism. My method of using cue cards was not approved by my initial supervisor, so I abandoned a highly effective means of collecting quotes for writing papers and, of course, the dissertation. That is part of the reason why I'm writing these Study Dude articles, to unveil what the proper study techniques are and to share them with my beloved friends, namely all of you.

Also, I tended to use a lot of direct quotations in my writing, stringing them together with my introductory texts for each piece of quoted material, but, when using way too many quotation marks, paraphrasing is the better way to go. I never knew that, though, and thought that direct quotations strengthened my argument.

Here are some tips for writing either your literature review or your undergraduate essay:

- At the beginning of each paragraph, first state your own ideas and thoughts pertaining to the subject, and then use quotes as follow-up to further cement your point-of-view. This gives you an air of authority.
- Use comparison and contrast of different points of view in the literature and talk about the major themes that you identify across the literature.
- Insert actual quotations sparingly. Prefer to paraphrase when citing other authors. Too many actual quotes linked together makes for hard-to-read writing.
- Don't cite others materials at length in one quotation. Instead, introduce the sentence with your own thoughts and follow it up with a paraphrase or direct quotation.
- Incorporate as many primary sources as possible.

(Roberts, 2010)

I scratch my head at what a primary source is exactly. So, to streamline the beloved reader's understanding, here is a short list of what constitutes a primary source: memoirs, autobiographies, a newspaper article written during the time of the event, government documents (census data, regulations, debate minutes, etc)—as they represent the government's voice, diaries, photographs, maps, audiovisual materials (such as videos and mp3s), email correspondences, maps, war memorabilia, jewelry, board games, photographs, sculpture, music scores, interviews, (retrieved from http://www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/primarysources/primarysources.html#top).

These materials are "first-hand testimony or direct evidence... created by witness or recorders who experienced the vents or conditions being documented" (retrieved from http://www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/primarysources/primarysources.html#top).

How to Synthesize the Literature (p. 100)

Have you ever been told to synthesize the literature, and nodded your head agreeably, all the while not fully understanding what synthesis means? It's easy to hear the words compare and contrast, but until you either get your feet wet or look at examples, the structures can be a bit muddling at first. Here are some one or two word descriptions of what it means to synthesize material: compare, contrast, explain relationships, find themes, find key ideas, find patterns, unveil contradictions, expose inconsistencies, generalize, discuss changes (over time), and make connections (Roberts, 2010). The important thing is that you should go beyond what any particular author on the subject has to say about the matter (Roberts, 2010).

If you didn't necessarily understand how you could put the above in practice, don't worry, you are not alone. (The Study Dude is right beside you on that one.) Yet, the following section on matrices will give you a better clue on how to synthesize the material in a handy-dandy chart form.

Use a Matrix (p. 97)

This is the Study Dude's favourite part of the book: the matrices. My cue card system was one definite positive approach to gathering, synthesizing, and organizing researched quotes, but there are a number of other very positive systems for making the process streamlined.

When I was first an undergraduate and had been assigned the task of analyzing a philosophy excerpt, I would read that excerpt at least once through, take that excerpt and write every sentence on a unique cue card, and then I'd write the main topic of the sentence on the cue card on the back of the card—in the form of a single or double keyword, such as "love", "anarchy", "euphoria", etcetera. I would then notice when multiple topics would reappear, and sometimes would condense topics into tighter categories (such as integrating the connections between love and euphoria).

Yet, writing a paper—with multiple sources—would be even easier with the following system in place: the matrices. If you write a paper of any kind, consider using a matrix system (a matrix can be viewed as basically a simple table) for the collection and organization of your data. They are especially effective if you want to write a book, so don't be afraid to flex your literary muscles and write with high efficiency to your beautiful heart's content. You can make all kinds of tables, and Roberts (2010) has plenty of table examples for you to explore and integrate into your study routine.

Here is the one table for synthesizing materials, taken directly from her book. The source is Nevills (as cited in Roberts, 2010, p. 97):

Name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Etc
Arpin, Kant, 1991							X	
Betaini, Tafel, 1989			X	X	X	X		
Castle, 1989				X				
Fullan, 1991		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Garmston, 1991		X	X		X		X	
Etc.								
Total		16	9	9	11	15	12	

The total is a tally of how frequently the articles appear under each alphabetical letter, and each alphabetical letter represents a keyword that you encode with the table.

For instance: "A = adult learners; B = Self-directing; C = Practical, relevant; D = Involved in planning..." (Nevills, as cited in Roberts, 2010, p. 97). See? Each alphabetical letter represents a keyword or phrase that you see reappear through your research. Ah—the joys of study.

The Study Dude has to let you in on a secret: If you are going into graduate studies, or have plans to do so, The *Dissertation Journey* by Carol M. Roberts is the one book that you must consider investing in and reading in full prior to enrolment (whoa! More than four prepositions in that last sentence! Rewrite!) It is rated at five stars on Amazon. I cannot stress how brilliant this book is for divulging the very best of the best tidbits of knowledge on how to manage a graduate program.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

Roberts, Carol M. (2010). *The Dissertation Journey*. Thousand Oaks: CA. Corwin

The Travelling Student Clearing

Philip Kirkbride



My name is Philip Kirkbride. I'm a college graduate from Ontario studying at AU. I've always wanted to do an exchange program or study abroad but never found the right time to do so. This is part twelve in the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program. In part eleven Matt and I reached our "piece", having hauled giant brush cutters some thirty minutes into the forest, and I was getting ready to start my first day of clearing a small, remote part of Northern Quebec.

With the sounds of the woods and cutting in the background I put my safety helmet and goggles on. I readied my saw, now strapped onto my back to ease the weight—that lesson had been learned on the trek in. With a swift pull of the cord my engine started up with a roar. I pressed the trigger on the saw and the blade started spinning, supposedly reaching speeds of 12,300 rotations per minute. All I could tell was that it was faster than I could see.

I looked to my right and saw Matt swinging his saw through the bushes with the facial expression of a statue. We were sharing a piece. Meaning we would be paid based on our combined speed, so I had to keep up. With that thought, I started attacking the thickest bush I could see. The sharp blade cut through the large bush like a knife through butter. "Wow," I thought, in awe of the blade's power.

After about ten minutes of me cutting through a patch of bush Matt approached me signaling for me to turn off my saw so we could talk. "You're cutting down the crop trees," he said.

"What's a crop tree?" I replied. I had started with no training or briefing, and at that moment I realized I had no idea what our purpose was.

Matt gave me a quick but lengthy explanation of what brushing was all about, and our overall purpose. I won't go into too many details but here is a quick summary. After a forestry company harvests an area by cutting down all the large trees they are legally required by the government to replant the area. The need to replant forests creates a sub-economy in forestry revolving around replanting forests. The first step after cleaning up an area is to send in tree planters who plant several hundred pine trees a day.

It isn't until after several years after the initial planting that brushing comes into play. By chopping through all bushes and vegetation which isn't a crop tree we give the crop trees (Pine, Spruce, etc.) plenty of light. Brushing drastically increases the speed at which the crop trees grow back, aiding in the re-forestry effort.

Of course, by this time I had chopped down several crop trees. So with my newfound knowledge I fired up my saw and continued cutting. The day was slow and, for the most part, uneventful. At one point the boss came around and asked about our experience. When I let him know that I had never done it before, he looked like he was going to have a heart-attack. I'm not sure if I had been expected to lie about my experience, because there were one or two other people on the job who I could have sworn were new, but they claimed they had experience. Despite the bosses reaction to my having no experience I was able to keep cutting alongside Matt.

The day was long, the sun was hot, and the wind was cold. I should have packed a lunch at least twice the size of what I'd usually eat because by lunch I had already eaten it. By two o'clock I felt like I was going to fall over from exhaustion. At some points I worried that I'd fall on my blade while going up or down a steep hill. With an hour left to go I felt I was ready to collapse from exhaustion. It took a quick break to let me go back at it for the remainder of the hour, leaving me completely drained of all energy.

Finally, at four-thirty, we were ready to call it a day. Of course we still had to make the thirty minute walk out of the bush again and wait to be picked up. Walking out the second time felt like torture. My body was completely unprepared for the punishment that is brushing.

When we got on the cramped work van the upbeat African music raised our spirits and made the crowding of the van and smell of gas fumes more bearable. Within minutes, despite the music, the crowding, the smell, and the bouncing of the van over half-made roads, I was asleep.

When we arrived back at the work camp I immediately went to bed. I only woke up when I was told supper was being served. I ate my fill as quickly as possible looking forward to going back to bed. I couldn't think, I couldn't move, and I could hardly talk. My mind was completely blank. If brushing continued to be this tough finishing my courses at Athabasca would be nearly impossible.



Council Connection

Barb Lehtiniemi



Meetings that achieve a certain flow can be deceptively hypnotic, like a soothing zephyr.

For me, Wednesday's AUSU council meeting began on the right foot, because I was able to get an agenda for the meeting. Trying to follow a meeting over the phone without an agenda is challenging, especially when I want to write about the meeting. Now I don't have to trust my hearing when I tell you about which policies were discussed.

Council routinely reviews AUSU policies and there were several on Wednesday's agenda. Recommended changes to [Policy 3.04 Referendum and Plebiscite](#) were approved to be brought forward to the next AGM or SGM for AUSU members to vote on. Students can look forward to seeing this on the agenda for this spring's AGM. [Policy 1.03 Policy Manual Maintenance Administration](#) does not require a student vote, and updates were approved with minor revisions by council.

The wind shifted a little for the next five policy items, as these were all voted to be repealed: [Policy 9.04 Student Travel Expenses](#), [Policy 9.11 Committee and Meeting Attendance Options](#), [Policy 9.13 Tutor Service Standards](#), [Policy 9.14 Incentives for Program Students](#), and [Policy 9.19 External Copyright](#). (As of time of writing, these policies were still available on the [Policy Manual](#) page of the AUSU website, so if you're quick you may be able to access them before they're removed. Otherwise, if you're really interested, you should be able to contact the AUSU office and get historical copies.)

There was little discussion during the meeting regarding these five policies, but it was clarified that these policies would be removed completely from the policy manual. In general, the reason given for repealing these policies was that they were no longer relevant and, in some cases, no longer reflected AU operating practices.

Four of the repealed policies were created ten years ago; the fifth only six years ago. What wasn't discussed was the background discussion which prompted development of these policies in the first place. Also not discussed was whether potential amendments to the policies had been considered to ensure their continuing relevancy. It's easier to maintain or amend a policy than to develop one. One hopes council made these decisions mindful of potential future shifts in the wind.

For example, policy 9.11 was about AUSU making sure that the university keeps allowing people to attend the meetings by distance technology, whether by phone, computer, or anything that doesn't require people to fly up to Athabasca to attend a public meeting, something AUSU apparently had trouble with at one point in time. However, the AUSU executive pointed out that AU was now allowing distance technologies as a matter of course, so there was no longer any need for this policy to exist. But what happens if a future university administration decides to renege on allowing distance communication options at their meetings?

Or, when it comes to the now repealed policy on copyright, what happens if the government decides it wants to pass some restrictive laws around copyright that prevents students from being able to properly source or cite materials for their course work? Or if AU decides that getting part-time students to take a program is too expensive and only wants to encourage full-time students to do so? Let's hope Wednesday's decisions don't prove to be short-sighted. Storm clouds can linger a long time beyond the horizon before arriving, but still must be anticipated.

The last part of the meeting was the usual breeze of reports from council executive, committees, and staff. Here are some highlights discussed:

- AU's interim president's term has been extended. AUSU council president Jason Nixon noted that Peter MacKinnon maintains a good relationship with both student groups.
- AUSU has engaged an outside contractor to assist with website changes and updates. Updates should be more timely going forward.
- The possibility of online applications for AUSU student awards is being investigated.
- AUSU Student Planners arrived in the office January 5. AUSU hasn't begun promoting this year's planner yet, but the ordering process is in place (log into your AUSU account and go to your Account Info page to order.) Even without promotion, almost 200 students have ordered planners so far.
- The first enrolments for the new healthcare plan were active on December 1, resulting in a number of inquiries to the AUSU office. There's now a FAQ document available on AUSU's [Health Insurance](#) page.
- AUSU staff members are setting up vendors for EFT payments which will replace the current cheque process. This will save time and expense once it's all set up.

Full reports are only available to council members at meetings. However, I'm pleased to notice that AUSU has resumed its practice of posting the full reports on their website. You can find the reports appended to the meeting minute files on the AUSU [website](#) (the most recent file available is for the November 14 meeting; minutes are only posted after they've been approved at the following meeting.)

The meeting wrapped up after a reasonable 63 minutes. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 11 at 5:30pm MST.



Life Happily Ever After

Serendipity rocks. If you've been paying attention in your own life you've probably experienced it firsthand. But let's begin at the beginning.

About ten years ago I embarked on a weekend-long, silent, self-guided retreat at the Star of the North Retreat Centre in St. Albert. In this very space I've written about that specific experience and the benefits in general of stopping to be still. Because I've remained on their mailing list all this time I received their latest semi-annual publication.

This time I paged through the program guide and saw two or three sessions that appealed to me. Because I began a yoga practice in late fall, I gravitated to those courses.

With both the *Yoga Retreat: Love & Nurture Yourself* and the *Yoga & Journaling Workshop* there were websites listed that offered more information. Nosing around one of those sites I discovered a tele course called *What's Behind the Chocolate Cake?* It promised nine one-hour group telephone calls spread over four months that would help us see beyond the distractions (like chocolate cake) that take our attention away from what we really need to focus on. Because for many of us, "When we have feelings we don't want to feel, we often reach for something else to avoid the feeling."

Early registration would save money, have a bonus session, and include a fifty-eight-card deck of Reflection Cards. The cards are quite lovely. Each one offers a word (like Nature, Spirit, Trust), text, a reflection question, and an image from nature to contemplate. Randomly selecting a card to reflect on allows one to set her intention for the day, focus her energy for yoga practice, provide a prompt for journaling, set the stage for meditation, or express gratitude.

Another thing that makes the tele course practical in our busy lives is the unlimited replay option if you can't 'attend' live on the designated night and time. So far, I've missed the live bonus session and the first scheduled call.

To support the learning we are encouraged to have a journal or paper and pen handy to do exercises or make notes as prompted. There are also printable handout-cum-journal worksheets to allow a person to take the process from passive listening to active engagement. Co-presenters give us the benefit of two different skill sets, life experiences, examples of human frailty, and success. The two-week break between calls is to allow further assimilation of the material.

And of course the timing of this course coincides with the usual reflection and resolution setting typical in January. We are told that we don't need to wait 365 days to begin again to improve our lives.

Am I likely to register for and attend the two retreat centre courses in February and April? Oh, yes.

To recap: a long ago retreat>mailing list> read the program guide>explore websites>register for tele course> do the work>use the reflection cards>strengthen yoga and journaling practice>register for two new courses> live happily ever after, from where I sit.

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

Music Review "High Line"

Samantha Stevens



Artist: The Bone Chimes

Single: "High Line"

Music has a way of becoming part of our everyday lives. Personally, there is nothing I love more than creating and listening to a personal soundtrack when I am out and about in the world. The songs on my playlist are typically not of the average pop music variety, and, in many of the songs, the musicians are able to create pictures about the world around them. "High Line" by The Bone Chimes is one such song.

Created in 2010, The Bone Chimes is an indie rock band from New York. The band released their first album, *In the Muck*, in 2013, which they boasted contained music comparable to a combination between Buddy Holly and Dave Matthews Band. Inspired by David Bowie, The Beatles, and Buddy Holly, The Bone Chimes' new single transcended all of my expectations. "High Line" is a single from the band's upcoming album that is to be released this spring.

The song starts with a simple down-to-earth sound, a wholesome blend between vocals, bass guitar, and an electric beat. As the song progresses, the drums are slowly introduced and the song picks up tempo. The song made me think of walking downtown in a busy city, where the traffic is subject to the ebb and flow of the traffic lights, and the city takes on a rhythm of its own.

Almost as if The members of The Bone Chimes must have wished to create a song that captured the essence of an urbanized setting, because the band had the genius to add a large variety of sounds to the song. The typical rock elements are present, but the addition of the occasional backup female vocals, and trumpet playing keep the song fresh and fun. In fact, I have listened to it several times, and have yet to tire of it because I keep finding something new.

The singing in the song reminds me of The Tragically Hip, but with a twist. That homey singing combined with the back-up singing elevates this song from the average urban rock to a song with an intense human element that some modern music has failed to capture.

The vocals are filled with hope and new beginnings. Whether it's a night on the town, or wandering the urban sprawl in the hope of finding something new, the lyrics in "High Line" capture the promises that a city offers to those who seek their wishes fulfilled amongst its high rises and never-ending sidewalks.

So if you are looking for a song with an upbeat tempo that will put a spring in your step while walking around town, be sure to check out "High Line" by The Bone Chimes.

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Taking Advantage

Dear Barb:

I am the oldest of four; I have two younger sisters and one younger brother. My parents have always been hard on me and I tried to accept this because I was the oldest and had to set an example for the younger ones. When my youngest brother was in his early twenties he started abusing drugs and to support his habit he began stealing money from our parents. My parents are not rich and they know he is doing this, but they keep making excuses for him. This is coming between me and my parents as I don't think they are helping my brother by allowing him to continue doing this. My sisters agree with me. I have been trying to get my parents to report my brother to the police, but they refuse, saying he is their son and he is just going through a hard time. I hate to see this happening to my parents, but I don't know what I can do to stop it! Thanks, Chris.

Hi Chris:

Thanks for writing about this unfortunate situation. Parents often feel responsible when they have a troubled child, as if they did something to cause the problems. Usually this is not the case, as it takes a combination of factors to cause someone to choose the wrong road in life. I would suggest that you and your sisters stage an intervention with your parents. It may be easier to report this situation to the police if they have the support of all their children. However, before going to this extreme, perhaps you, along with your siblings and parents, could approach your brother and find out what is going on with him. Attempt to determine if he has a drug

addiction or if something else going on his life that is causing him to act in such a reprehensible manner. Sounds like he may need some professional support from a counselor or rehab program. Hope this helps, good luck!

Dear Barb:

I have a quick question, I have been told something in confidence about a family member. The problem is I know that this information could significantly help this person, but I'm not sure if I should break my confidence. Do you think I would be warranted in breaking a confidence to help someone who is having significant problems and ultimately would benefit from knowing this information? Thanks Stan.

Hi Stan:

This is always a tricky situation. Perhaps you could approach the person who told you the information, suggesting that they privately disclose this information to the family member. If they adamantly refuse, then you will have to make a judgement call as to whether this information really needs to be told. If it is beneficial to someone's health or well-being, you may have to take the chance on losing this friendship in order to help a family member. If it will not significantly benefit someone, then I would not divulge this information. This is undoubtedly a difficult call to make, but it is your decision. Thanks for your question, Stan.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

Comic

Wanda Waterman

COMMANDANTE FARETADO IN: BRAIN TRUST

I need a brain trust. Bring me the most fascist, racist, xenophobic people in the country.

But Commandante, those people are all working for the immigration department!



Egad! Why do we have an immigration department?

To provide jobs for the most fascist, racist, xenophobic people in the country!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



AUSU
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

This space is provided free to AUSU: The Voice does not create this content. Contact ausu@ausu.org with questions or comments about this page.

Featured AUSU Member Service: Advocacy

A key role of AUSU is advocacy, both at the individual and institutional level.

Strength is in numbers, and the goal of any students' union is to provide a unified voice for the student community to accomplish things we could not do alone. All AU undergraduates pay SU fees, so AUSU represents all undergrads.

If you require advocacy or mediation on any issue, or even some support and information, you should not hesitate to contact AUSU. We provide advocacy for both individuals and for the membership as a whole.

For more information on how AUSU can help you, please visit AUSU's website at:

<http://www.ausu.org/services/advocacy.php>

Great AU Finds Online

Counselling Assessments – Am I Ready for studies in ...? Counselling Assessments – A series of review modules to test your skill in a variety of subjects (currently there are assessments for English, math, chemistry, Microsoft Access, and computing science). Use these to determine if you need to brush up on a subject before diving in to a course, or just for fun. Also, Mapping Your Future helps you choose an occupation.

For links, see:

http://counselling.athabascau.ca/assess_yourself.php

AUSU Featured Groups & Clubs

Group Name: **AU – Faculty of Business**

Where: **Facebook**

Members: 1134

About: Members are all types of students, staff, and alumni with AU. The members of the group seem to

IMPORTANT DATES

- Jan 30: Last business day to extend courses ending February 28
- February 10: Last day to register for courses starting March 1
- February 11: AUSU Council Meeting
- February 16: Family Day – AU & AUSU closed
- February 27: Last business day to extend courses ending March 31

support, encourage and give advice to each other on AU Faculty of Business topics.

Activity: Posts several times per week that are mostly news and information on the AU Faculty of Business.



This Week at lynda.com

lynda.com experts have curated playlists to get you started. With hundreds of lists on a variety of subjects, there is something for everyone. Visit the playlist center for more information and enter the playlist title. This week's featured list:

Build Leadership Skills

Being a student at AU creates some difficulties in being able to hone leadership skills, yet every employer values them. Fortunately, lynda.com has training on a wide range of career and business skills. The Build Leadership Skills is ideal for new grads, or anyone seeking employment while they study. This stream of courses will teach you:

- How to be a leader people love to follow.
- How to uncover your hidden strengths and talents.
- How to inspire your team.

Have a look at this playlist and start using the skills in your everyday interactions outside of school!

Courses: 7

Duration: 8h 52m

Skill Level: Appropriate for all

Have you signed up for lynda? It's free for AUSU members. To learn more, check out ausu.org/services/lynda.php

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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