

THE VOICE

Vol 29 Issue 01 2021-01-08

BEST OF THE VOICE 2020

*Plus:
Scholarship of the Week
Authentic Events
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

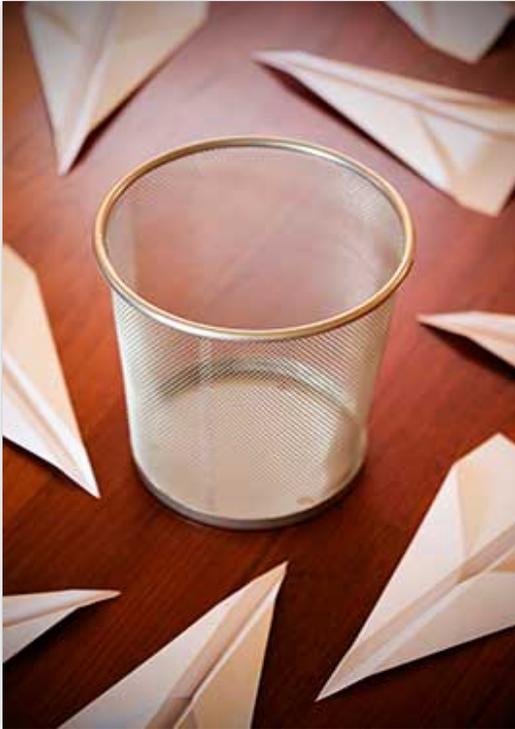
Hey! Did you know the Voice Magazine has a [Facebook page](#)?

No kidding! We also do the twitter thing once in a while if you're into that.

Editorial

Bringing you the Best Of!

Karl Low



Out with the old and in with the new, right? Not quite! There's still a little bit of the old that deserves some recognition, and that's what the Best of the Voice 2020 is all about.

For those that haven't been here before, each year we like to take a selection of the best articles of 2020—both the best overall and the best representatives of what *The Voice Magazine* is each week—and bring them all together into one great big issue for you.

With articles chosen (mostly) by students and people in the Voice community, this issue reflects you, our readers, and of course the students and writers who gave us so much content over what was such a tough year.

Interesting about this year is that there were definite months that stood out. October and November were well represented, while three of the selections were from a single issue that came out on July 31. But we had articles spanning the entire year, with our first coming out in January, and the most recent having been published only a few weeks ago

on November 27.

One thing that isn't from 2020, however, is our round up of AU events, scholarships, and what's going on over social media about AU. So if you're looking for that information, have no fear.

But enough from me. You've come because you're curious as to what the best selections from all 49 issues of writing by and for AU students was. For a reminder of how there were some shining spots throughout the year.

And I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

MINDS WE MEET



Who are your fellow students? It can feel like you're all alone in your studies, but across the nation, around the globe, students like you are also pursuing their AU education, and *The Voice Magazine* wants to bring their stories to you and vice versa. If you would like to be featured next, do not hesitate to [get in touch!](#)

Lethbridge, Alberta's Tianna Vonkeman recently enrolled in AU and is in the 3rd year of her degree in the Bachelor of Professional Arts in Criminal Justice.

Tianna completed her diploma from Lethbridge College before enrolling at AU with the goal of being "accepted to law school, specifically University of Victoria's JD/JID Program."

"I was debating between Lethbridge College, Athabasca, and Royal Roads for my degree. When I spoke to an adviser at University of Victoria they helped me narrow it down to Athabasca or Royal Roads and I decided Athabasca gave me more freedom as I wouldn't have to travel to the campus for any classes."

Tianna has started her first two courses at AU and has been enjoying CRJS 492: Criminal Organizations. She added, "I do find the lack of structure from AU intimidating, and with coronavirus I have had a hard time carving out time for my studies. I took online schooling before AU, but I had a study spot that is now closed to the public and it's been challenging to find a way around those obstacles."

Tianna grew up in Lethbridge before moving just outside of London, England, in her 20s. After meeting her now husband, she stated, "I lived with him there for a couple years and, after we were married, we decided to move to Canada. He went back to school the first couple years after we moved back and got a diploma in Information Technology. Shortly after, I started a job in corrections and finished my courses with Lethbridge College. We have recently added a new family member, he's a 10-week-old Siberian Husky named Tikaani, and all of our free time has been training and playing with him."

Tianna doesn't have much time for hobbies because of her hectic work schedule, stating, "I come home everyday excited to play with our puppy and spend time with my husband." However, she recently had the time to finish *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah, mentioning, "It was an amazing book that kept me on the edge of my seat. I ... finished it (in 2 days!) because it was so hard to put it down." As for television shows, she mentioned, "Most of what we watch at the moment is

puppy training videos which have been very helpful and informative. We normally watch UK shows, our favorite one right now is called Taskmaster which is a game/comedy show.”

Tianna’s bucket list is unique, revealing, “The number one thing on my bucket list would be swimming with humpback whales in Tonga. Tonga is one of the places where humpback whales give birth and it is one of the few places where you can swim with them. Every time I watch a YouTube where someone has swum with the whales I honestly tear up. I can’t imagine the smallness and connection you feel when you are swimming with such a majestic creature.”

When asked if she could move anywhere in the world, she stated, “I would probably choose Italy or New Zealand if I had to move anywhere again. I loved my time in Italy and found the culture and food intoxicating. My husband and I have talked about moving to New Zealand because of their government responses and nature reserves, but we doubt we will move to another country again.”

I also asked about who she’d like to meet, if she could meet anyone at all. “If I had the chance to meet any person, I would have loved to meet Princess Diana. When I was growing up, I didn’t have many friends and would often choose to go sit in the library instead of playing at recess, I vividly remember sitting and reading any book I could about Princess Diana. She seemed so elegant, kind, and thoughtful even though she was publicly humiliated and hurt by the British press and royal family. I remember being distraught when I came home from school and saw the images of her car accident. I found her strength of character so inspiring. A couple years ago I worked for the UK government and we had a celebration at the Houses of Parliament which Prince William was meant to be at, and I so badly wanted to say how much Princess Diana inspired me, but unfortunately he was called away for the Air Ambulance that night.”

When asked about her proudest moment, Tianna stated, “My proudest moment would be moving to another country. The year before I moved I had a bad breakup, decided to make a spur of the moment vacation to Japan, and, while travelling, met a guy who introduced me to my husband. I am glad I had the courage to take the risk to move and be part of a relationship after the previous year was so difficult. I learnt so much from my time overseas that couldn’t be taught in a classroom.”

In the future, post-AU, Tianna hopes “to graduate and go to the University of Victoria for their JD/JID program.” She mentioned, “My ultimate goal is to become a lawyer.”

As some final thoughts, Tianna stated, “I am very excited to continue with Athabasca and hope the next semesters go better than this past one. I hope everyone is staying safe and looking after themselves during this unprecedented time.” Best of luck Tianna!

Natalia Iwanek is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English at Athabasca University and is also a freelance editor and writer. She can be contacted at <https://www.nataliaiwanekediting.com>.

[Minds We Meet is one of the perennial favourites of students, so it was no surprise that one of them over the year was nominated. For me, these articles are a large part of the mission of The Voice Magazine, to help us get to know the many, many others who are on similar journeys, no matter how far apart or different we may be. This particular feature dates from early October, and it was noted “I loved the candor of Tianna, especially when she revealed her heart about sitting alone at lunchtime, not having many friends in elementary school.”]



A Life Altering Day

Barb Godin



My sister, Mary, and I were incarcerated in Ontario Training Schools for Girls, at 12 and 13 years old. Training schools are better known as reform schools. At that time, all I knew about reform school was what I had seen in movies and on television shows. Reform schools were portrayed as a place where girls and boys are sent to be punished for bad behaviour. The truant officer had warned us that this is where we would end up if we didn't go to school, but we never believed it would actually happen. I thought people got sent to training school only if they had committed a crime. I didn't realize not going to school was one. Our parents were mostly concerned with meeting their own needs, so my sister and I were left to our own devices, and, as you can imagine, attending school wasn't part of our agenda.

Following my parent's unemotional testimony in Family Court, Mary and I hugged them both and said a tearful goodbye. We were taken away by a court official to a waiting car containing two middle-aged men. My stomach began to tighten as I tried to convince the men to stop by our house so we could grab a few things. My plan was to escape, but one of the men said that wasn't possible and we were abruptly on our way to Galt Reception Center, in the community of Cambridge, Ontario. We were scared—unaware of what was ahead for us. For the most part, the men ignored us while chit chatting with each other throughout the long drive.

My experience in Galt Training School and, later, Kawartha Lakes School in Lindsay, Ontario, was one of the worst experiences of my life. The atmosphere in the Training School was oppressive, controlling, and regimented. It seemed the intention was to steal our identity—to remake us into the type of people they felt we should be. We were treated like criminals; so I began to believe I really must be a bad person. Over time, I became withdrawn and rarely spoke to anyone, and, since my sister and I were separated, I felt extremely alone.

The school was organized on a point system, points for housekeeping, grooming, and good behaviour. At the end of the week the four girls with the most points would receive a ribbon.

Bullying was a normal part of life in training school, and punishment was harsh. If you broke a rule your punishment would be to lose one of the few privileges you had, or having to scrub the gym floor on hands and knees, or the ultimate punishment: being sent to solitary confinement, better known as The Hole. There was no privacy in training school. All our personal activities were scrutinized closely by the staff, even having a shower. It was a humiliating experience to say the least. All I wanted to do was get out of there. It made me a totally submissive person; I became the person they wanted me to be. If that was the only way to get out, that's what I would do. However, in the process of becoming who they wanted me to be, I lost my self.

After six months I was released to a foster home. The foster home was a further continuation of more years of abuse. I became a broken person, with no self esteem and little hope of finding any happiness in this life, but I continued to search. I looked for happiness in an early marriage, the birth of my daughter, re-educating myself, but nothing brought me that systemic feeling of happiness. I believed I had to keep my shameful secret and never let anyone know I had been sent to that place where bad boys and girls go to get fixed.

One day, while I was watching Canadian news program, W5, everything changed. The commentator began talking about Ontario Training Schools and how children had been unfairly incarcerated and treated like criminals. My eyes and ears were glued to the TV. The reporter was interviewing a man who had been sent to Training School as a young boy. He talked about the shame he felt, the low self esteem, that feeling of being intrinsically bad. The same feelings I felt and had kept buried all these years. At the end of the program, a link was shared where more information could be found about an ongoing Class Action Suit for Crown Wards who had been incarcerated between certain years. I immediately went on the site and found more information. I filled out the application and, through tear filled eyes, revealed my story in detail for the first time.

Within a week I was contacted and told I was included in the Class Action Suit and I was advised to apply to The Criminal Injuries Board for compensation. I filled out the extensive application for the Criminal Injuries Board and was granted the maximum award. It was not a lot of money, but, for me, it was a validation that I had been treated unfairly. I felt as if I was finally able to breathe in a way that I hadn't since I was 12 years old, before this nightmare had taken over my life. I was not a bad person; the people who did this to me were the bad people. I felt the rebirth of the 12-year-old girl I had lost so many years ago. Everything looked different, everything felt different; I now looked through the eyes of a woman who was in the process of being healed from a terrible wrongdoing.

I hope telling my story would be beneficial to other women who have been sent to Training school, so they will be able to share their truth and realize this was not their fault and finally begin to live their life.

The class action Suit is expected to go to trial in 2021, and, with a positive outcome, thousands of girls and boys will be vindicated and finally be able to live the rest of their lives with the knowledge that they were not the bad children that the Province of Ontario had convinced them they were so many years ago.

Barbara Godin is a graduate of AU and writes the "Dear Barb" column. She lives in London, Ontario with her husband, and two dogs. She can be reached on twitter @BarbGod

[Barb Godin (of the Dear Barb column) occasionally steps away from the advice game to write about her personal life and learning. While these stories are often intensely personal, they also fall into the category of good reads, so I'm quite happy to publish them in the Voice Magazine.

Now, I'll be honest, we don't get a lot of students sending in nominations each year (and I don't blame them, what with it always being so close to Christmas when I start asking, people are busy) so when a single article gets mentioned by more than one student, I take notice. Not that I would have published a Best of 2020 without this article being in it anyway, but it's nice to know I'm in touch with the zeitgeist sometimes.]

Why We Should Never Throw Away Keepsakes

Marie Well



I don't know when the trend of throwing away all my keepsakes began. But I now know the regret that follows.

I read that some people treasure keepsakes, and I never understood why. But when we cherish a piece of the heart someone left us in form of an object, we can later reflect. If we throw a keepsake away, it's like throwing away a beautiful memory or a close relationship. When that person leaves this world, what do we have left to stare at? Careless disregard? Guilt? Or the feeling that we truly cherished the person?

My brother would ask me about people of our past. I brushed off my brother, saying I had no attachment to people of the distant past, only people of the present. I said history didn't mean much. But each moment in history etches who we are. As we age, those people of our past draw out life's most important question, "How much did we love the people in our lives?"

A beautiful friend wrote a poem about me. It spoke about how I had big dreams, and it used the metaphor of a mountain. In that poem, I climbed that mountain but kept falling. The world was pulling me down. At the end of the poem, I barely made it to the top, beaten and bruised. And I put down a white flag, a victor.

The poem terrified me—so much so that, years later, I threw it out. But today I feel a great loss without that poem, without that shared history between me and my friend, without that precious reminder that love sparkles for everyone even in the darkest times, even in the loneliest moments. I now wish I never threw that poem out. I asked my friend yesterday if I could pay her to write a new one. I assured her I'd keep it for the rest of my life. The poem was precious history lost.

In another instant, I had photos of me and a person I once loved on our trip to Hawaii. But after the relationship ended, I threw the photos away. I didn't have the heart to look at them. And now, as he enters his twilight decades, I've nothing by which to remember those years, but regret.

In yet another instant, I begged my mom for a painting my aunt made. I hung it up on my living room wall. When it came time to move to a new suite, I left that painting behind, believing my aunt disliked me. But today I have a beautiful relationship with my aunt, one I cherish deeply, one based on a gentle friendship. Yet, she's in her 70s, and within a decade, I may lose her. And then I'll look up to an empty wall, crushed.

When we cherish keepsakes our loved ones give, we immortalize those bonds. We nurture the history. We pay homage to those who shared our journey. The people in our lives are all there for a reason. At the end of the day, we must ask ourselves, "How much did we cherish the people in our lives?" Or simply stated, "How much did we love?"

[Marie Well has been writing for The Voice Magazine for years, but this recent piece from the November 20th issue was a departure from her usual style, and one that worked very well, thus landing it a spot in the Best of 2020 edition.]



Porkpie Hat Basic Rules for Post Mid-Winter Survival

Darjeeling Jones



This As we all know, January has been scientifically proven to be approximately twice as long as all the other months of the year put together. This is indisputable. This, by itself, is a problem, and contributes to psychological balance and physiological homeostasis becoming approximately as stable as an existential tilt-a-whirl. This, of course, follows hard upon the heels of the stressful winter holiday season, with its (at least for me) Caligula-like levels of self-indulgence, and its many literal, financial, and spiritual hangovers. Compounding the dire situation still further is the fact that January is followed pretty much immediately by the hideous hybrid month, known as 'Farch,' which T.S. Eliot famously described as "the cruellest month." (Note to self: renounce your lazy-ass ways, and be sure to verify this literary reference before embarrassing yourself and sending it off to the editor! You have been warned.)

[Mission accomplished – just not the one you wanted. -Ed.]

With all of that in mind, I feel it behooves me to provide my gracious, long-suffering readers with a few helpful hints and tidbits that may help them endure the frozen, sodden, windswept temporal territory between now and the arrival of spring. So, here goes:

1. Take the advice of Goethe: Never hurry, never rest. Well, I say "never rest," but really you should probably rest quite frequently. And eat those pink frosted donuts, the kind with sprinkles. You can do that while you're resting.
2. Make lots of mistakes. I mean, really fuck things up. You know you're going to anyway, because, well, human and all. But if you make it sort of a rule, then you can have the satisfaction of placing a check mark beside it. It may be helpful to invest in a clipboard.
3. Listen to more music, and expand your horizons. Listen to everything from Scandinavian death metal to Chopin etudes. Nothing cauterizes the ragged, wounded soul quite so well as the soft torch of music.
4. Take up four new interests, and stick with them. You can easily find the time by cutting back on social media and Netflix. You spend way too much time in front of a screen. You know it's true.
5. Always be kind, and be generous with your time and energy on behalf of others. But pay attention to the kick ass wisdom of flight attendants and adjust your own oxygen mask before seeking to assist others. I think you know what I mean.
6. Devote yourself to one massively ambitious project this year. Something you're passionate about, but that will really stretch your mind, body, and soul. Write a string quartet or a romance novel. Train for a marathon. Knit yourself a space shuttle.

7. Find lots of really good hiding places. Abandoned aquariums or treehouses can be good. Bring lots of candles, books, jujubes, pickled herring, and stilton cheese.
8. Read more, and eat more vegetables. Maybe trim back a little bit on an unhealthy habit or two. (But don't go overboard with that, okay? It makes the rest of us look pretty bad.)
9. Force yourself to do two things every day that you would rather not do. For me, it's getting out of bed in the morning and going to bed at night. (Don't forget the check marks. Man, this is gold!)
10. Finally, do yourself a favour and ignore all of this gibberish, and substitute your own, more helpful strategies. Do whatever feels right for you and gets you through to spring. Should any of the foregoing be helpful to you, though, please, be my guest.

[Darjeeling Jones wrote for The Voice Magazine for some time before deciding to move to greener pastures after the first half of 2020. I could always count on the Porkpie Hat to be thought provoking, almost decadent. So I was very happy to receive the go-ahead to republish this piece, with the original editor's note included, from way back in our January 24th issue, as part of the Best of 2020.]



National Indigenous People's Day – June 21, 2020

Why Communication is Essential to Fostering Diversity

Adrienne Braithwaite

In a recent press interview, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke about an “unconscious bias” impacting all Canadians. Now, more than ever, our cultural perspectives and unique identities are being called into question, especially in political and corporate sectors.

Our increasingly globalized economy demands sameness, which is in direct opposition to natural human culture. In our daily lives we embrace our cultural heritages, our family histories, and our preferences for our living arrangements. The corporate world, however, demands we leave these parts of our identities at the door. How can we embrace our cultural identities while trying to further our careers and professional standing?

AU Press recently shared a new (and free) book by Kyle Conway, titled *The Art of Communication in a Polarized World*. In his book Conway “confronts the communication challenges of our modern world” by trying to open the conversation about diversity in both the public and private spheres. Not only can embracing diversity allow us to express our identities in all facets of our lives, but Conway suggests that it can be used as a tool to influence new and more efficient ways of doing business.

Athabasca University's online educational environment provides the perfect platform for connecting students from all cultural backgrounds and engaging in the conversation about diversity. Students have opportunities to broaden and consider multiple perspectives with discussion forums and courses designed to prompt critical thinking about diversity. Educational institutions are an ideal setting to initiate dialogue about diversity and foster empathetic, more understanding citizens for Canada's future. AU's online learning creates safe space for asking hard questions and listening to the opinions of others.

One of my favourite philosophers, Paulo Freire, encourages students to use words to transform the world around them (2012). He believes communication is a means of liberating the oppressed and how beginning the conversation in the educational sphere is the first step to breaking down social and cultural boundaries (Freire 2012). Without first understanding and having empathy for one another, even the most honest actions can be misplaced and ineffective.

In Alberta, the Teaching Quality Standards ensure teachers provide an educational atmosphere that promotes diversity and respect for all students. National Indigenous Peoples day on June 21, 2020, provides an excellent opportunity to celebrate diversity and cultural expression in Canada. As undergraduate and graduate students at AU, our respect and appreciation for cultural diversity will continue with us in our careers. By communicating to employers the need for eliminating bias as well as the value of embracing inclusion, we are leading the way for innovation and more positive work environments.

AU's Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies offers a variety of undergraduate areas of study which challenge students to think critically about social and ethical concerns impacting Canadians. This June 21, I challenge AU students to consider what their role is in showing solidarity and respect for the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. Together we can change the way Canadians embrace diversity, eliminate discrimination, and respect cultural expression.

More information about Canada's National Indigenous Peoples Day can be found on the [Government of Canada web site](#). If you want to explore Indigenous related literature, CBC offers [a list of books](#) written by First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors.

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Adrienne Braithwaite is completing her After-Degree in Secondary Education at AU. She has a passion for literacy and cultural studies and hopes to pass on her enthusiasm to secondary students in the future.

[Sometimes the best pieces are those that just give some background information on important but little known things, such as this one about National Indigenous People's Day. With the larger amount of attention that's being paid to indigenous people's history and their struggles, this student nominated piece from our June 19 issue is emblematic of some of the education I like to hope The Voice Magazine can provide.]

Beats from the Basement

The Police

THE POLICE

SYNCHRONICITY



Album: *Synchronicity*

Artist: The Police

After essentially turning my entire basement upside down in the name of music, I have had a difficult time deciding what would be my penultimate entry for this series. I suppose leaving my favourite new wave band, the Police, for last would've been more suitable, but I've got something else in mind instead.

That's a topic for another time, of course, because we've got experiments to unfold and journeys to embark on in the final album by frontman Gordon "Sting" Sumner, guitarist Andy Summers, and percussionist Stewart Copeland. 1983's *Synchronicity* managed to leave a lasting impression on critics and fans alike just before new wave was beginning to

phase out, and it features considerably less reggae elements compared to the trio's earlier efforts with their rock music.

Rather, the songs are primarily structured around thick textures and polyrhythms that mix synth pop with blues and ethnic influences. Such enigmatic choices support the purpose behind *Synchronicity*: to show how seemingly unrelated though coincidental events, theoretically, may share a common meaning and are dictated by some arbiter of fate. Each track should be regarded as an anthological contribution to this underlying theme, which seems to suggest that the unpredictable—and often, chaotic—nature of life is not born from a lack of control.

Our musicians expertly weaved these fascinatingly disconcerting ideas into the dark relationships we humans have with ourselves, others, and our planet. From the title to the lyrics, *Synchronicity* abounds with literary references and heavy subtext that encourage listeners to explore the literature so they can reflect on the messages between the lines.

Ambition has its drawbacks, however. One or two songs can break immersion with their stylistic choices alone because they make the album's first half seem overproduced and abstract. By contrast, the second half plays out like a coherent narrative, starting with "Synchronicity II." It uses the analogies of a working-class family man's miserable life and the Loch Ness monster's rage to illustrate an inevitable breakdown. While I don't think it's necessarily the most sonically pleasing of the tracks, the rhythmic patterns and chord progressions do sensibly follow the lyrics.

Simpler arrangements can be effective in creating a particular mood, like in the highly misunderstood "Every Breath You Take." Summers and Copeland maintained an up-tempo beat throughout, but downplayed their performance to emphasize Sting's balladic interpretation of how an individual's jealousy leads to surveillance. That many people over the years have considered this a declaration of love, as cynical as it sounds, might prove how we view relationships—and therefore, the point of the album. That said, I respectfully disagree with Sting's insistence that it's malicious. I find it sad and desperate, the epitome of a wandering soul in the night unable to cope with its losses or comprehend its faults.

Milica Markovic

My favourite piece of the Police era has always been “King of Pain” because it perfectly captures the daily energy that we, deep down, don’t enjoy keeping up. The mixture of marimba with rock accompanies Sting as he observes unfortunate circumstances and simple annoyances as painful realities he must continue to endure under the guise of enthusiastic hustle. How many of us completely ceased to participate in society and enjoy the little pleasures we can find because of the harrowing sights we might have experienced? Exactly.

For all these one-sided emotions, we have songs that are spitefully responsive such as “Wrapped Around Your Finger,” which describes changing—and unhealthy—power dynamics between two people. There’s something very detective-like in its soft, yet suspenseful tone—a probing of the proverbial oyster, if you will. It’s a reasonable direction for the music considering that it tries to navigate complex states of mind.

Synchronicity reflects its band members’ feelings at the time. They were suffering through failed marriages and apparently did not get along with each other in the studio. I would never wish misfortune on anyone, but it appears that their personal troubles may have authenticated the themes in their album. Perhaps it was meant to show that, no matter how dearly they probably held one another, the time had come for a chapter to close as far as studio recordings were concerned. It’s a beautiful kind of cruelty that makes you appreciate the journey more.

Milica Markovic is a Toronto AU student enrolled in the MA-IS program with a BA in criminology and political science.

[I have to admit, I didn’t actually believe Milica would run this as a limited series, as I saw it as a column that has a potential as big as the history of popular music. However, she chose to stick to her guns, and from the set, this look back at The Police was, I felt, a great example of how a music review should be done, with depth, context and background, and yet still keeping the music at its heart.]



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Polar Northern Resident Award

Sponsored by: Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies

Deadline: January 31, 2021

Potential payout: \$5000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada, be long-term residents of Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon, or the Provincial North, and currently enrolled part- or full-time at either a northern college or in an undergrad program at a Canadian university. Refer to [full eligibility criteria](#) for further information.

What's required: A completed online application, a referee report, official transcripts, and a proposal for a community outreach activity.

Tips: Read the [Full Guidelines](#) for complete info on requirements.

Where to get info: acuns.ca/awards-and-scholarships/cnst-awards/



The Struggling Student Rants Mid-COVID Money Woes

Angela Pappas

We're All Just a Little Messed Up



I don't do sappy. However, the world around us has changed. Everyone seems isolated—more so than before—and I feel like the majority of the planet has no grip on reality. We all scroll through hundreds of social media posts, from real and imaginary friends, claiming if anyone needs to talk they should reach out. But we all know that that's much easier said than done. Don't be fooled by the hype.

Sometimes, social media is great for connecting, zoning out, or being entertained. Other days, however, all of these fake posts can get you down and make it seem like everyone else has their ducks in a row, their poop in a scoop—except you. And now, when literally no one on this planet knows what's

going to happen next, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

Instagram has always had an endless supply of photoshopped posts, showing how so-and-so is living their best life, and, somehow, even though they lost their job, they still are. Facebook seems to be the nesting ground for all things MLM and virtual Tupperware parties—more so than normal times. Everyone has joined “business support groups” to promote their neighbour's business. There are days when I feel like Scrooge McDuck because I keep declining the offer for \$100 Scentsy bars. I would rather my family eat the apples than smell the apples. Pinterest... well, they're just carrying on with *Holiday Decor for Under \$20* hoping no one will fully grasp what's going on. The people posting these are either trust-fund-babies or out of their mind.

But let's all be real for a moment here. I'll be the first to raise my hand and admit that writing for *The Voice Magazine*, sending out good money vibes, or talking about personal finance all day, every day, does not, by any means, equate with my financial ducks being in any sort of row. Nothing could be further from the truth and I apologize if I've added to anyone's anxiety by writing about tips and tricks or talking finance and streams of income. The truth is, we are all messed up in our own special way, without having the world come to a halt. Everyone struggles out there on a good day, and I mean everyone. If anyone argues this and says they're sailing through all of this, they're lying—either to you or to themselves. Even Queen Elizabeth, the richest old lady I can think of, is worse off than she was pre-COVID.

Add a sprinkle of unemployment to the mix, a dash of a breathtaking virus, a whole lot of global unrest, and you've got yourself a cleaned out wallet. All of this can, of course, be served with your choice of side: nonstop migraines, nervousness, restlessness, feelings of impending danger, hyperventilating, increased heart rate—take your pick. If you find yourself struggling financially, waking up in the middle of the night, or trying to figure out how to climb up Alice's rabbit hole please don't give up hope and know that you're not alone. Seriously.

Many of us, from all walks of life, are dealing with financial stress and uncertainty this year. 2020 has felt like a horrible episode from the original *The Twilight Zone*—the wallet that eats \$50 notes, the paid bills that reappear in your mailbox every morning, the Girl Scout selling \$10 cookies every night (or else). Regardless of where your stress stems from, whether it's from losing your job, escalating debt, unexpected expenses, or all of these, finances have been the most common factor everywhere I look.

Like any source of stress, this takes a huge toll on our mental health, our physical health, relationships, and all aspects of daily life. Sleep might seem like a long-lost friend; I don't know about you, but nothing keeps me tossing and turning like a four-figure bill quite does. Never mind the new wardrobe (including pyjamas) because literally nothing fits. Stress wreaks chaos on our appetites and money woes can cause you to overeat, skip meals to save money, or even turn to other coping mechanisms. If you're reading this and getting antsy, don't worry, I'm not spying on you—I'm just in the same boat. We all are. For myself, the word "uncertainty" is going on my hate-list. I swear if I hear one more person say "uncertain times" I may just go postal on their ass. But it's alright to feel uncertain. It's a legit feeling, as are they all.

You may feel angry, ashamed, or fearful and start picking fights with those closest to you. I know I certainly have started doing so and some days I feel like a crazy old lady in curlers and a housecoat yelling at the youngsters driving by with their music blaring. You may also be withdrawing from the outside world. COVID-19 had me self-diagnosing agoraphobia through WebMD until I had to force myself to go to the grocery store.

I recently spoke to a long-time friend in the medical profession who works in a large ER unit. She noted that COVID-19 has changed life as we know it more than we think. But it's definitely evident in the hospitals. She disclosed to me that cases related to overdosing, alcohol poisoning, attempted and successful suicides, have all doubled nationwide. However, she sarcastically noted, while the news has been focusing on the number of infections and hospitalizations from COVID-19, they're downplaying all of the other issues that have surfaced. Like I said, I don't do sappy. I do, however, believe that we all are struggling much more than we did before COVID-19

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

MBA for Executives Webinar

Tues, Jan 12, 10:00 to 11:00 am MST
Online, Hosted by AU Faculty of Business
news.athabascau.ca/events/mba-for-executives-webinar-20210112/
RSVP through above link

Talk to a Librarian Drop-in Session

Tues, Jan 12, 9:00 to 9:30 am MST
Online via Microsoft Teams
Hosted by AU Library
library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html
No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

Hack the Library: Using Discover to Access Journal Articles, Books, and E-Books

Tues, Jan 12, 2:00 to 3:30 pm MST
Online via Adobe Connect
Hosted by AU Library
library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html
No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

Colour Contrast Webinar

Wed, Jan 13, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm MST
Online. Hosted by AU
news.athabascau.ca/events/colour-contrast-webinar/
Register through above link

Talk to a Librarian Drop-in Session

Thur, Jan 14, 3:00 to 3:30 pm MST
Online via Microsoft Teams
Hosted by AU Library
library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html
No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

AUSUnights Virtual Student Social

Thur, Jan 14, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MST
Online via Zoom
Hosted by AUSU
www.ausu.org/event/ausu-virtual-student-social/
RSVP to ausu@ausu.org for meeting link

The Grad Lounge

Fri, Jan 15, 1:00 to 2:00 pm MST
Online via Microsoft Teams
Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies
fgs.athabascau.ca/news/events/index.php
No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted

become a household name. As the Struggling Student [that] Rants I'm not going to rant this time. I'm simply popping in to say that no matter how hopeless things might seem—in that moment—there is always someone to help out there. Someone to talk things through with you and maybe even help you sort things out. You just need to make the hardest step of all—reach out and let them know you want to talk. It truly is the hardest step, but also the most important. [AU](#) has fantastic resources through [Homewood Health](#) for all of their students, including a 24/7 support line and options for virtual counselling sessions.

[Homewood Health](#) has also partnered up with the [Government of Canada](#) and [Wellness Together Canada](#) to provide free resources, assessments, unlimited phone counselling sessions, and many other valuable resources for all Canadians in a different platform than the service that AU provides, one that's anonymous. My advice is that, regardless of whether we feel we do or don't, we should all make good use of these resources. Because 2020 has affected us all in one way or another. Talk to friends, neighbours, family, or even strangers. Sometimes it can be easier to talk to someone we don't know. Finally, focus on what you can control rather than all the things you can't. I realize this is easier said than done but we all need to take things one day at a time and look towards the light at the end of the tunnel. That light is either gonna be a glorious outcome or a train. Either way, we'll all find out together.

Angela Pappas is a part-time AU Certificate student who enjoys learning and discussing anything personal finance and personal development related.

[Late in October, as we came to realize that COVID-19 had not been defeated, a bit of humour could go a long way. The Struggling Student Rant column often provides us with that, using it to couch serious lessons about money and other issues that students are dealing with. Little wonder it was nominated for the Best of 2020 edition.]

The Art of Living Together Cross-Species Collaborations in The Animal Kingdom

Alek Golijanin



Humans sit atop the food chain due to our cognitive capabilities and our advanced ability to communicate with one another. With everything we know about the cognitive and communication sciences, it might lead some to assume that non-domesticated cross-species collaboration is impossible. It should not be possible for birds and crocodiles or spiders and frogs to “get along”, and yet they do. It is hard to identify the starting point, where we can say this is where these and many more unique cross-species collaborations started. However, these collaborations are nothing short of remarkable.

Collaborations on Land

There are quite unusual cross-species collaborations on land that really challenge our understanding of how distinct species could have gotten to a point where they are working together.

Crocodiles are know known for their ferocious bite and even the slightest of movements result in them chomping

down. But plover birds who eat the food debris and leeches between the crocodile's teeth are what help crocodiles avoid infection. Crocodiles sit with their mouths open and allow the plovers to pick away, refusing to bite down on them despite being evolutionarily trained to shut their mouth at the slightest of movements.

Also, tarantulas are known to hunt critters including small toads, but they give the narrow mouth toad a pass. This is because the narrow mouth toad keeps a tarantula's den insect free, and it gives time the eggs need to hatch. This specific relationship has been recorded in the USA, but a similar one has also been recorded in Colombia, where the lesser black tarantula often shares its home with a dotted humming frog, a prey it could easily kill and eat. Scientists have even documented spiders grabbing these frogs and inspecting them with their mouths, before letting them go unharmed.

Collaborations Under Water

Life underwater is a little less glamorous, but crabs and fish are the most documented when it comes to mutually beneficial relationships with other water life.

The hermit crab, on the other hand, actively seeks out sea anemones. This is because the sea anemones also protect the crabs from becoming prey--travelling on the crab's back and feeding on its leftovers. When the hermit crab moves into a larger shell, it often convinces the sea anemones to let go and the sea anemone allows the crab to reposition it on its new shell. The anemones will not let go of the old shell otherwise, even if other creatures pull on them.

Goby fish and blind shrimp also have an unusual relationship, where the fish's excellent vision is exchanged for the shrimp's ability to keep the den clean. The goby fish has also been documented giving the blind shrimp a tail flick when it spots danger so that they both go and hide. On the other hand, clown fish bury themselves within a sea anemone's poisonous tentacles, being immune to the poison and cleaning the tentacles from parasites while predators avoid coming near the stinging tentacles.

Takeaway

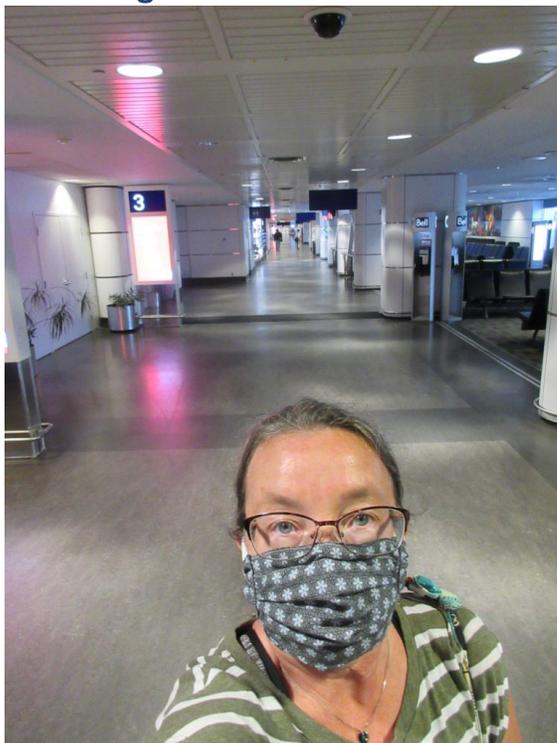
Humans have domesticated various animals for the sole purpose of taking advantage of their unique abilities. Rats have been trained to detect mines, while boas have been used as guide animals to identify seizures. While these are all cool feats, I find myself more in awe when the cross-collaborations occurs naturally in the wild. However, no moment will be greater than when I first read that crocodiles had dentists that came in the form of the plover birds, it made me think of the Waterboy and his momma. His momma told him that alligators were ornery because they had a lot of teeth but no tooth brush. For the record, I believe it is due to their medulla oblongata, but a tooth ache can make the even the happiest angry.

A combat sports fanatic, Alek is a fourth year business student who like to read research papers for fun.

[This nomination surprised me. Not that it's not a good read, but I thought, even when publishing it initially in our November 20th issue, that it might be a little too niche for some. Still, there is a faculty of science for a reason, and it obviously holds a lot of interest for a lot of students. Enough that it was brought up for inclusion as part of the eclectic mix that makes up The Voice Magazine, and hence, the Best of 2020.]

Empty Skies Travelling in the new abnormal

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Travel comes with risks at the best of times. Travelling during a pandemic adds an unsettling new dimension.

It was with some trepidation that we booked flights to Canada's west coast. We researched the airlines to learn what measures they were taking to keep passengers safe. In addition to disinfecting protocols, mandatory mask wearing, and reduced in-flight service, major Canadian airlines were blocking off the middle seats to allow for physical distancing.

The clincher for us was that we could fly direct from Montreal—the nearest major airport to our home in Eastern Ontario—to Vancouver. To avoid public transportation and ferries on the BC end, we booked a regional flight to take us to within a few kilometres of our ultimate destination.

Within days of making our bookings, WestJet cancelled our outbound nonstop flight from Montreal to Vancouver. Offered in its place were two flights: Montreal to Toronto, then Toronto to Vancouver. This upped our risk factor: another airplane plus another

airport.

After much consideration, we reluctantly agreed to the new flight plan. Cue the ominous music.

Toward the end of June, we got the next shock: both WestJet and Air Canada announced that, as of July 1, they would no longer block off the middle seats. Instead of comfort knowing neither of us would have to sit next to a stranger, we were faced with the real possibility that one or both of us would be rubbing elbows with—and inhaling the moist breath of—someone of whom we knew nothing.

Ratchet up the anxiety level! We would never have booked flights if we'd known all seats could be filled. Still, we decided to take the risk, uncomfortable though it was. There was still time before our mid-July flights to order transparent face-fields, which we could wear in addition to non-medical face masks. Would that be enough to keep us safe?

We'd heard that airports were largely empty, but it still seemed surreal to enter Montreal's airport and find almost nobody there. The place had the empty feel of a shopping mall before opening time. We were screened at the door and had to don our facemasks.

Since we'd checked in online, printed our boarding passes at home, and were travelling with carry-on luggage only, we headed straight to security screening. One screening lane was open to accommodate the handful of people in line. There were more security personnel—trying desperately to look busy and important—than travellers at any moment.

Most of the airport shops were closed, but we found a Tim Hortons outlet open. A coffee was most welcome before our early departure. It also provided a legitimate reason to remove my mask while I sipped it.

Physical distance was easy to maintain, rendering the masks redundant for the most part. There were so few people sitting in the departure area, and there were many vacant areas nearby.

Our first flight was a one-hour hop to Toronto. Passengers were boarded in stages by zones. There were so few passengers there was no reason to line up until our zone was announced. In addition to checking boarding passes and ID (requiring passengers to briefly remove their masks,) airline staff checked each passenger's temperature with a non-contact device.

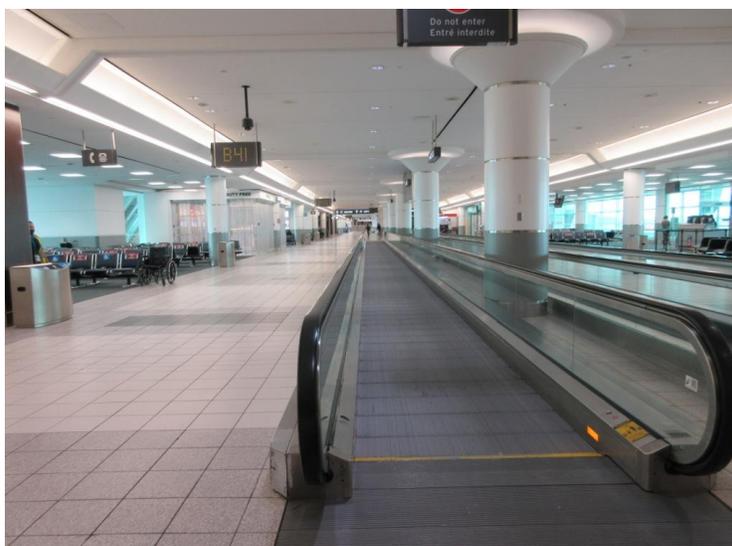


First leg Montreal to Toronto - incredibly empty

We were relieved to find the third seat next to us remained empty. And we were surprised to find that most of the plane's seats were empty—the aircraft was barely 25% full. As with other flights on this trip, most passengers seemed to be in the 30-to-60 age range and travelling solo. There were almost no seniors, and very few families.

The Toronto airport, where we were laid over for almost four hours, seemed even more empty than Montreal. By late morning there were still very few people around, and most of the shops and restaurants were closed. The departure board for Toronto's Terminal 3 showed only 32 departures scheduled between 9am and midnight.

With so few people in the airport, we easily maintained a physical distance of many metres. We removed our masks to eat our packed lunch, since there would be no food available on the flight. Another coffee meant we could keep our masks off a bit longer, a strategy we noticed many others employed.



Toronto's terminal 3 - just echoes

The boarding procedure for the second flight was the same: boarding by zone to minimize people bunching up and a temperature check. Judging by the small number of people in the departure area, this flight would be mostly empty too.

We were dismayed, then, to have another passenger claim the third seat beside us. Faced with the prospect of sitting in close quarters with a stranger for five hours, I immediately put on my face shield (other passengers wore shields, too, but most did not.)

The WestJet cabin crew noticed the crowding in our row, and quickly offered us seats in another row. We had paid extra for our chosen seats, but safety outweighed the expense. The solo passenger refused to move, so move we must.

Despite this initial discomfort, the flight was nearly 80% empty. Some passengers moved to totally vacant rows so they could have three seats to themselves—handy for napping. The cabin crew offered water and cookies during the flight but, other than that, there was little movement around the cabin.

The Vancouver airport was noticeably busier than the other two we'd been in earlier, but still much less busy than we'd ever seen it. For our final flight, we had to transfer to the airport's south terminal. There is usually a free shuttle, but that service had been suspended. When we went to the taxi queue, we were given a free taxi voucher in lieu of the shuttle.

Taxi operators servicing the airport face much-reduced need for their services. Additionally, they need to sanitize their vehicles between every fare. We tipped our driver well.

The small south terminal, and our onward regional flight, seemed more relaxed about mask-wearing. Only about half the passengers on our 19-seat flight wore masks, and we didn't have to undergo temperature checks. At the end of our 30-minute flight I was glad to remove my mask. Except for eating and drinking, I had worn a facemask for over 14 hours.

British Columbia doesn't currently require travellers from other Canadian provinces to self-quarantine (but they do discourage non-essential travel.) Regardless, after four airports, three flights, a taxi, and more people than we'd been around in four months, we were glad to reach the quiet and relative solitude our destination.

Fast-forward a week to our return journey. Although we had only two flights on the way home, the timing meant overnighing at a Vancouver hotel. As before, our regional flight was almost full (full meaning 19 passengers.) In Vancouver: another taxi ride, another generous tip.

The hotel, one we've stayed at previously, seemed almost empty. Although our assigned room had been vacant for several days, we were careful to minimize what we touched. After washing my hands dozens of times, I realized it would have been easier to sanitize every surface with wipes as soon as we entered the room.

The next morning, in lieu of the hotel's usual breakfast fare, we were offered a bagged breakfast of a muffin, yogurt, juice, and a tangerine. With coffee made in our room, it was an adequate start to the next day. We'd picked up some portable food at a grocery store to tide us over the rest of the day.

The hotel's airport shuttle service was still running, and we arrived at the Vancouver airport 90 minutes before our flight. As we had noticed the previous week, that airport seemed busier than Toronto or Montreal, but not by much. The departure boards showed 30 flights—mostly domestic—from 9 am to 6 pm.

The pre-flight temperature checks of passengers at Vancouver's airport was conducted before security screening, which made more sense than doing it during the boarding process. The security screening area was not at all busy.

Our homebound-flight was with Air Canada, and took us direct from Vancouver to Montreal. This aircraft was larger, with a 2-4-2 seat pattern, but the flight was just as empty as our outward-bound flights. The seats near us were sparsely occupied, and the back of the plane seemed all but empty.

As with our earlier flights, there was no food service. Cabin crew doled out "Clean Care" kits of a facemask, gloves, sanitizing wipes, hand sanitizer, and a bottle of water. More bottled water was offered throughout the flight.



Homeward bound Vancouver to Montreal - more seats empty than occupied

We arrived back in Montreal to a mostly-empty airport. After retrieving our car, we headed home amid Montreal's rush hour. To our relief, the highways were as empty as the airways.

Before our trip, and even during our trip, we had misgivings that it was too soon to travel by air. In retrospect, it turned out to be the best time to be an air passenger: no crowds and (mostly) lots of space between travellers. Those conditions—and the cheap fares—are unlikely to last. I don't expect to venture into airports again for a long time.

Barbara and her travelling companion voluntarily underwent COVID-19 testing one week after returning home. They are relieved to have both tested negative.

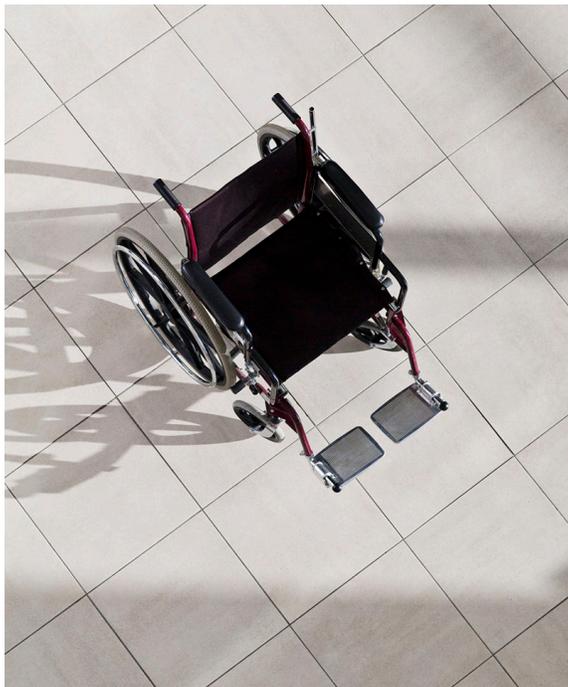
Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU graduate (BGS 2018.) She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario.

[Barb Lehtiniemi doesn't write articles for us as often anymore, she's busy getting her articles published in mass-release books and other things, but in the early part of COVID, shortly after the first lockdowns had lifted, her look at travelling across country was interesting and entertaining. Which is why it was published in our July 31 issue, and is now here in the Best of the Voice 2020.]

No Body Left Behind

Reflections on the Easing of COVID-19 Restrictions

Natalia Iwanek



Throughout this pandemic, I have found myself becoming increasingly preoccupied with societal attitudes and inadequate medical standards.

Among chronically ill, disabled, elderly, “essential” but expendable, migrant, and poor communities there is a sense of being sacrificed for economic reasons. I am angry at the dismissiveness of precautions, at the refusal to wear masks, and at the flippancy with which people refer to the small percentage of those who may die. Newspaper headlines debate who is truly worthy of care, while lifesaving medications are becoming inaccessible due to hoarding. I am part of this small percentage whose immune system is not strong enough to risk COVID-19 and whose monthly medication supply remains precarious. My anger stems from knowing the ease with which society has finally found the means to become increasingly accessible in educational and job opportunities and the fear that it will just as easily be taken away. I am also envious that life continues for most,

while my isolation remains.

Increased reports of people unable to recover fully from COVID-19 within prescribed timelines rings eerily true of my journey to diagnosis and treatment, as doctors fought amongst each other, disagreeing as to why I continued to deteriorate despite their standards. Many of us exist in a liminal space, not quite fitting into outdated regulations and inadequate research, while growing sicker by the day. The medical system’s failure to keep up with rapidly evolving illnesses and the sheer magnitude of the COVID pandemic fills me with fear for those affected.

I often joke that I came out twice in my life, first as queer, and recently, as disabled. However, this laughter is often a coping mechanism. For many, coming out is often difficult and traumatic, as individuals are forced to choose between living one’s truth and, if possible, living in the relative safety, but also shame, of denial. Coming out can also often lead to violence and loss of community. I have struggled for years with queer identity in the Eastern European diaspora, and now I struggle coming out into hyper-visibility as a cane user in my thirties. Although my health had been deteriorating for many years, it truly fell apart in 2018.

But humans have an incredible capacity for survival, and somehow we rebuild and continue to rebuild despite tragedy and complications. Despite the joy I feel as the world began to open up to me once again, it is simultaneously devastating, not as a result of my illness, but by the constant societal reminder that I am less than, that I am somehow damaged and broken.

I sense my presence causing discomfort, as friends drift away and strangers refuse to make eye contact in public spaces. As if my state were too much of a reminder of the fragility of life and of our bodies, that we can all become disabled in an instant, that we will all age, that we will all die. As if disability were something to be ashamed of. As if disabled bodies were not a source of pride, a source of joy, a source of beauty. Despite the struggles, I am fortunate because I am surrounded by those who broke my fall and provided me with shelter and safety. I am fortunate

because, despite what I have endured, my privilege has allowed me to make it this far. And slowly I make my home in this new, albeit changed, body with a newfound understanding and respect.

My education continues thanks to Athabasca's online format and ProctorU. Many chronically ill and disabled students are often forced to discontinue their education as a result of lack of accommodations, exclusion, and bullying. Years earlier, I had to leave school because of health; this time, my education continues around my medical schedule.

When I began my freelance career, I made the decision not to hide my illness, fully aware that it would affect my hire rate, that people would doubt my competence or my ability to be productive. Although this body allows for many things, it does not allow for a typical job. Those who require accommodations deserve flexibility to contribute in our own way, to sustain ourselves and lift ourselves out of the endless cycle of poverty and systemic abuse that illness and disability often bring. Despite this knowledge, I often hide how ill I truly am, as I continue to produce work, not only to support myself, but also, subconsciously, to prove that my life has value. A lifetime of societal and internalized ableism under a labour-centric economic system is difficult to overcome.

July is National Disability Month in the United States, a movement that has spread unofficially to Canada as well. According to Statistics Canada, disabled individuals make up 22% of Canada's working age population and 6.2 million Canadians live with at least one disability. Despite varied bodies, minds, and experiences, we are the world's largest minority, and our voices matter.

Models of Disability

Various models of disability exist, two of which include the medical model and the social model. The medical model links an individual's disability with the limitations caused by physiological or cognitive health problems, often characterized as deficiency or abnormality, and seen as something that must be treated or cured. In contrast, many disability justice advocates and individuals subscribe to the social model of disability, which sees society as disabling individuals from full participation through a lack of accommodations.

Increasing Economic Struggles

The majority of chronically ill and disabled Canadians live well under the poverty line. Disability benefits are often difficult to obtain and keep recipients in a cycle of poverty. In Ontario, the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is \$1,169 per month, while many others survive on Ontario Works (OW), where a single person receives \$733 per month with a \$200 exemption before the government begins clawing back 50% of earnings. ODSP has not been substantially raised for decades and both programs fall under the poverty line. The government has only recently eased restrictions on assets, with a limit of \$10,000 for OW and \$40,000 for ODSP. 1.6 million Canadians with disability are unable to afford required prescriptions, aids, and devices. In many countries, those who get married are further penalized, often resulting in unequal power dynamics and abusive situations.

Pre-pandemic, these amounts were almost impossible to live on in most Canadian cities, including major cities, with their close proximity to hospitals, appointments, and specialists. During this pandemic, CERB and CESB payments from the federal government have been treated like income for ODSP and OW recipients, with 50% of the provided amounts cut back from ODSP and OW payments after the first \$200, despite rising food and household supply costs, special diets, medications, and inaccessible transit, while many are simply ineligible.

Disability History

The long and complex history of the disabled community is often difficult to track, as many individuals were simply excluded from the historical record. The record does include the barring of “undesirables” or those who could not support themselves (Nielsen 100) during immigration and industrialization, the rise of forced sterilization and increased institutionalization (Nielsen 66), and the so-called “ugly laws” seen in the United States in which forbid “any person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or deformed in any way, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, to expose himself to public view.”

Despite successes and society’s proclamations of progress – especially increased rights, deinstitutionalization, and independent living movements, and overlap with the civil rights, queer, and feminist movements (Nielsen 160–162) – a great deal remains the same, including the criminalization of any sort of apparent difference in the eyes of society, including disability, mental illness, poverty, and skin colour.

When the disabled community is represented, it is often as a source of derision, as a source of pity, or as a foil to abled-bodied individuals. Often, the disabled community, in its countless manifestations, is expected to be inspiring and motivational, as opposed to simply being human. We are all familiar with the countless inspirational memes that ask, “What’s your excuse?” juxtaposed with an image of someone in a wheelchair performing extraordinary feats. The implications are clear; disability is only acceptable if it inspires, reduced to simply existing for the sole purpose of making abled-bodied individuals grateful for their lives. It also implies that disabled individuals could “overcome,” if only we truly made an effort.

In her memoir, *Falling for Myself*, Canadian author Dorothy Ellen Palmer sums this up succinctly as she reveals the “real function of inspiration porn: to assert narrative control. Ableism only accepts two stories: disabled people can either die quietly or ‘individually triumph over’ disability ... [It] cunningly plants the lie that all disabled people can individually overcome disability, if they really want to, if they just work hard enough, it absolves people of any responsibility to see systemic ableism, or to fight it with us” (Palmer 180).

The constant reminder that you do not belong, that you are less than, that you should not take up space remains. I feel this acutely when I leave my home; as if I dared to break some sort of code that people like me should be hidden from public view, so our bodies do not offend. I have found myself being addressed in infantilizing voices; I have well-meaning, but ultimately harmful, people taking away my agency by deciding for me that I need help, as opposed to simply asking. I have struggled with the term disabled, as a result of my own internalized ableism, the privilege of living many years in an able, albeit, rapidly changing body. I struggle to this day, feeling as if I do not deserve to claim it at times; despite the fact, every aspect of my life has been altered, despite the fact that the world is now full of limitations and accessibility concerns.

The Disability Justice Movement

As a movement, disability justice evolved from work by the queer disabled community of colour, including members of Sin Invalid, a disability justice-based performance project, who stress, “Disability exists in every sector of society: in immigrant communities, in prisons, in religious and spiritual communities, among veterans and homeless folks, among children and elders and everyone in between, so every movement has to advance disability justice, and vice versa.”

Chronically ill and disabled individuals are often treated as an afterthought, a burden on able-bodied society, despite transcending age, race, ethnicity, and gender. Disability justice means justice for all. Our pandemic has truly brought our shortcoming as a society to the forefront. We live in a society in which our judicial systems continue to fail to tackle issues of race, poverty,

mental illness, and disability without resorting to violence. Nearly half of all those killed by police in the United States are disabled, with a majority, people of colour, with systemic problems apparent in Canada as well. Our economic system is on the brink of collapse from consumers simply buying only necessities during the pandemic, and many of us live one paycheque away from financial ruin. As a society, we continue to prioritize individualism initiatives over the health and lives of the most vulnerable in society. We vote in governments that defund education, health care, and social safety nets, that refuse to create increased rehabilitation services, safe injection sites, and access to therapy, but prop up transnational companies and violent institutions.

Cries of “all lives matter” coupled with the refusal to wear masks and vaccinate to protect vulnerable communities, despite the knowledge that Black and Indigenous lives in Canada face disparate rates of systemic violence and medical racism, especially those who are disabled and trans. These communities are dying from COVID-19 at disproportionate rates as a result of historical and current systems of oppression. Calls for straight pride month and white pride month, without understanding that prides exist to celebrate triumphs and acknowledge struggles, many of which continue to this day. Human rights for those underserved in our communities does not equal less rights for the majority. Only when dominant power structures celebrate and protect all lives will the need for pride affirming the very right to exist become superfluous. Refusing to acknowledge the struggles and celebrations of the overlapping disabled, queer, and BIPOC communities simply reinforces the idea that, in our society, many lives do not matter.

When those individuals who refuse to wear masks speak of their rights and freedoms being taken away with thoughtless comparisons to oppression and tyranny, I wonder if this is the first time, many have been told that the world is not theirs for the taking. As the closure of the world's borders have shown, passport privilege exists, and like many of the world's citizens, Canadians now acutely sense the absence of ease with which we crossed borders for vacations and relied on the Global South for resources. For the majority of the world's citizens, borders are obstacles, and often-terrifying ones.

As a society, we need to come from a place of believing those who come forward, whether those facing health issues, or women during #MeToo, or those currently in #BlackLivesMatter. We know how difficult and unforgiving this world can be, so when someone confides that they are being harmed, we believe them. Believe survivors; believe women when they are in pain, in particular Black and Indigenous women who die in disproportionate rates because of medical racism. Despite my privileges, I too was dismissed and undiagnosed for years, until my illness rapidly progressed.

Moving Forward

I ask those who have spent these four months of these pandemic-living-modified, increasingly impoverished and uncertain lives, to understand that this is daily reality for many chronically ill and disabled individuals. Keep in mind the added uncertainty and fear brought by this pandemic, and lack of adequate medical care that has exacerbated the situation for many.

Although I am angry, I am not bitter, and I continue, because my life has value, as do the countless lives of those in our communities. We are all worthy and pointing out difference is not, as some say negativity and divisiveness; pointing out difference and inequity is hope because it gives us the option to redress historical and current injustices. Change is not possible, until we first acknowledge that our society is fundamentally flawed.

So I say, go enjoy your summers and your lives, but remember that this pandemic has not ended. I am not asking you to feel guilty, only mindful and careful. Remember those of us at home who

do not cannot as easily access the often unearned privileges that many enjoy. I only wish to be protected and included in fair and equitable ways, which is what everyone deserves.

I leave you all with a quote I often think of during these uncertain days. Above a photograph of Black disabled activist and artist Leroy Moore, one of the founders of Sins Invalid, a caption attributed to Patty Berne reads, “All bodies are unique and essential. All bodies are whole. All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met. We are powerful not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them. We move together, with no body left behind. This is disability justice.”

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[The second of Natalia Iwanek's nominations in the Best of 2020. Coming in the heat of summer in our July 17 issue, and packed with information yet remaining easily readable and understandable, her solid logic and concerns for fairness for people resonated with students. This is also the longest article in The Best of 2020 edition, possibly the longest single article in 2020, and normally would have been split over a couple of issues. But it all seemed to tie so tightly together I couldn't bring myself to do it.]



The Study Dude

How I Improved My Highlighting in Five Easy Steps

Marie Well



At university, I highlighted like a wild dog—entire pages soaked in yellow. I'd take my highlighted points, jot them down on cue cards, and memorize them all. Study time was gruelling.

Weirder still, I couldn't figure out how other students got A's taking two more classes than me each semester. But I showed them: After one day learning a step-by-step secret to highlighting, my study skills sped up and my retention skyrocketed. Now, I hope to share the secret with you in five easy steps and two simple rules. After all, every keener wants an easy edge.

Easy step #1: Highlight one sentence per paragraph.

According to The Open University, “A good rule of thumb is to underline or highlight one sentence per paragraph. Paragraphs usually focus on one key point, and while they might include an illustrative example which may be useful, it is the main point that you need to identify first and foremost” (38%).

Good writers aim for one key idea per paragraph. Hopefully, that's who wrote your textbook. So, give the main idea in each paragraph a yellow glow.

Once, a prof assigned a textbook densely written to a first-year class I TA'd. The only sentences in the book worth highlighting were the ones that made sense on the first go. In hindsight, the book was poorly written: too many stuffy words that didn't add meaning. If you find yourself in this situation, simply highlight the clear key points and try to reword the rest in plain English. Highlighting key ideas keeps you on track.

Easy step #2: Jot a note in the margin beside your highlighted text.

The Open University says, “Some people find it more useful, then, to add in a short note of the example in the margin next to the highlighted sentence” (38%).

I love taking notes in the margins of books. If you do this, you'll be thankful come exam or essay writing time.

As an example, I bought a book on advertising slogans. I jotted down any useful tips in the margin. Later, when I had a job assignment to create ads, I opened the tome to find all the useful stuff waiting for me in the margins. No need for me to reread the entire book.

Also jot down any questions you have in the margins. Perhaps use a red pen for any questions so you can skip over them when time-crunched. Otherwise, you've always got time for margin notes.

Easy step #3: Think about what you read (and take notes).

The Open University advises, “The next stage ... is to begin to take the ideas into your thoughts, make your own sense of them, and begin to ‘talk to’ what you are reading: check you understand the main points; see how they relate to your own experience; think up other examples that may illustrate them; see how they stand up to questioning; and sometimes query them or begin to put forward criticisms. This is about reading and thinking” (44%).

To do all this, I suggest you type up the highlighted sentence and margin notes (from step #1 and #2). Then type up your own examples, comments, questions, and criticisms. Include a full reference to the textbook and page number. You'll reinforce the material, which means—yes!—better grades. Studies go better with note-taking.

Easy step #4: Organize your notes (and add comments and questions).

The Open University says, “Another way of processing ideas is to reorganize notes around a set of questions or thematic headings. This is particularly useful for those notes that you will be drawing upon for planning and writing assignments” (46%).

This is the best idea for essay-writing ever. I like to write down a one- to two-word theme beside every point I highlight in articles. That way, when it comes to writing papers, I can easily organize the themes into three key ideas (which then form the basis of a thesis statement).

A similar system is to put all your highlighted points on cue cards (along with citations). In one sitting, write a one- or two-word theme on the back of each cue card. The shorter the themes, the better. Then simply organize your cue cards into piles—a pile for each theme. Your papers will write themselves, and your grades will go up. So, fill up your study-tank with themes.

Easy step #5: Reread your notes (and add more comments and questions).

According to The Open University, “The technique of re-reading completed notes and supplementing them with comments and queries is a useful way of processing ideas” (46%).

Rereading your notes is great. Memorizing them is better, but, again, if you bulk up your notes with comments and queries, use a different color pen or circle them. That way, you can skip over the comments and questions come exam time.

But check out this other system: one author said to keep condensing your notes in stages. His aim was to tighten the notes so that they'd be easier to study from. I never tried his system, but if I did, I'd keep all past revisions as a hedge.

Which system should you choose? Try them both. See which one gets you the best grades with the least strain.

Easy step #6 (optional): Discuss what you learned using a blog, YouTube channel, forum, friend, or Meetup Group.

The Open University recommends, “Look for opportunities to discuss key ideas with someone else - either a fellow student or someone outside of the ... University who is interested in contemporary social science debates. This can provide a helpful stimulus to internalizing them” (57%).

This is the fun part. Go wild discussing with others what you learn. I watch a fine art student's YouTube clips on writing, and I love them. If you share what you learn, you'll do others a favor while bettering your grasp of the material.

And if you share online, who knows, with enough followers, you could monetize your study notes. Learn the spirit of earning money from your studies.

Now for two simple rules to streamline your studies:

Simple rule #1: Rely on shorthand.

“One way of both cutting down the time spent making notes and keeping them to an appropriate length is to make use of symbols, shorthand and abbreviations” (41%).

By using math symbols like “+” for “and” or “-” for “less,” you can speed up note-taking. “B/C” is often used for “because,” and “W/O” is often used for “without.” You could make up your own shorthand. Stick to your shorthand system, and you'll take notes in a flash.

Simple rule #2: Use your own words.

“It is not until you start to make your own notes, in your own words ... that you can really check that you understand ideas enough to work with and use them, particularly in preparation for assignments and exams” (41%).

Use this simple five-step system to master your studies. When your friends ask, “Were you born a genius?” just don't let on, “It's my highlighter.”

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[A simple advice column; aimed directly at and to help students. Coming from our May 1st issue, in some ways, this is symbolic of the heart of The Voice Magazine. Students helping students. If not for this, what else should we be publishing for?]



Visibility and Representation Perspectives of Those Systemically “Othered” in Canadian Publishing

Natalia Iwanek



Misrepresentative and often dehumanizing single narratives are often seen in literature, film, art, and media. These stories are frequently one-dimensional and often-inaccurate portrayals of communities, often resulting in mistreatment and violence from society and internalized oppression and diminished self-worth for those affected. In her immensely popular 2009 TED talk, The Danger of a Single Story, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie states, “I realized that girls like me ... could also exist in literature,” as she breaks down the issues that arise from reducing complex stories to single narratives.

Although the publishing industry still features homogenous voices, gradual change has begun. In recent years, various Canadian publishing houses have begun to feature an increasing variety of works from the often-overlapping identities and perspectives of BIPOC,

immigrant, disabled, neurodiverse, and queer voices.

Traditionally, these voices have been omitted from mainstream publishing and academia. And despite recent attempts at inclusivity and representation, academia remains predominantly focused on Eurocentric Western thought, with the works of William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Ernest Hemingway continuing to dominate literature departments.

Reading literature and listening to the stories of those whose perspectives may differ from our own experiences is widely thought to be crucial for developing awareness and, hopefully, empathy and understanding, which will, in turn lead, to positive change.

Representation and inclusion are especially important, now more than ever, with continued and increasing marginalization and oppression against those who traditionally hold the least power in our society. In particular, the power of language has been highlighted during this current pandemic, with comments by world leaders often leading to violence and aggression against communities.

The power of language is also seen in storytelling. In addition to oral folklore, the written word—in literature, in memoir, in essay—gives voice to our stories, helping countless individuals see themselves represented, and, perhaps, feel less alone. This increasing visibility empowers a new generation to experience accurate representations of themselves, as individuals and communities create their own narratives, released from narrow perspectives and stigma. Instead of portrayal as the “Other,” instead of inclusion simply as secondary and supporting characters, as villains, as monsters, as comic relief, as a foils for the protagonist—this new type of text slowly frees itself from colonial mindsets, exoticism, racism, prejudice, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ridicule, and inaccuracies. In the words of comic Hannah Gadsby from her Netflix special, *Nanette*, “My story has value.” All of our stories have value, even those traditionally deemed worthless.

The following is a list of recent books (and my personal favourites) from a variety of voices that have been gaining increased recognition.

***Scarborough* by Catherine Hernandez** – *Scarborough* features various stories and perspectives from the inhabitants of Scarborough, in Toronto's east-end, by queer author, performer, and playwright, Catherine Hernandez.

***Frying Plantain* by Zalika Reid-Benta** – *Frying Plantain* focuses on the life of Kara, a young second-generation Jamaican girl in Toronto's "Little Jamaica" neighbourhood by Toronto-based writer, Reid-Benta.

***Jonny Appleseed* by Joshua Whitehead** – The debut novel by Oji-Cree/nehiyaw, Two-Spirit Indigiqueer author from Peguis First Nation (Treaty 1), Manitoba, follows the life of Jonny, a Two-Spirit teen from his early years on a reserve to love and survival in Winnipeg.

***From the Ashes* by Jesse Thistle** – *From the Ashes* is the debut memoir from York University's assistant professor in Métis Studies. Thistle, a Métis-Cree author from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan deals with themes of guilt, shame, and resilience as he recounts his years of homelessness, addiction, and incarceration, along with stories of family ties and overcoming intergenerational trauma.

***In My Own Moccasins* by Helen Knott** – The debut memoir from Knott, a Dane Zaa/Nehiyaw/mixed-Euro descent author and social worker from Fort St. John, British Columbia, recounts living with and overcoming addiction and trauma, along with memories of family, activism, poetry, and social work experience.

***Heatberries* by Terese Marie Mailhot** – From Seabird Island, British Columbia, Mailhot's memoir spans her life in both Canada and the United States, with events ranging from motherhood and writing to time spent in a psychiatric facility, before healing, and finally finding peace.

***We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir* by Samra Habib** – A memoir by Toronto-based artist and photographer Samra Habib, *We Have Always Been Here* recounts early years in Pakistan, with explorations of Islam and queer identity. Habib is also known for photography, including [Just Me and Allah: A Queer Muslim Photo Project](#).

***Falling for Myself: A Memoir* by Dorothy Ellen Palmer** – Ontario-born and raised Palmer explores the intersecting systems of ableism, ageism, and class, as she recounts her life, including adoption, improv comedy, disability justice work, union work, and teaching under the Mike Harris government.

***The Clothesline Swing* by Ahmad Danny Ramadan** – The debut novel from Syrian-Canadian author and queer activist Ramadan, recounts tale of Hakawati, a storyteller who recounts stories and memories of life in Syria and Egypt to his dying partner.

Many of these authors recently spoke at the annual [Brampton Festival of Literary Diversity](#), which highlights underrepresented voices and [features reading challenges](#) for book lovers to expand their reading lists. The May challenge urged readers to choose a book from an author from a prairie province, while June challenges readers to find a beach read by an author from an underserved community.

For AU students who wish to go beyond these reading lists and reading challenges, consider ENGL 314 World Literature, with topics ranging from early Chinese literature to traditional Maya books to North African Islamic thought, ENGL 308 Indigenous Literature in Canada, ENGL 344 Post-Colonial Literatures, with literature from India, Nigeria, Kenya, and the Caribbean, ENGL 361, Literature of the Harlem Renaissance, and ENGL 458 The Latin American Novel.

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[The third of Natalia's articles that was nominated. I usually avoid publishing lists of people's favourite books, but Natalia managed to explain each book, and wrapped the entire thing in a compelling narrative exploring discrimination in publishing and our society back in our June 26th issue, so it felt worth publishing, and, seeing as how it's now being included as part of the Best of 2020, it seems I was right.]

Fly on the Wall Virtual Convocation 2020

Jason Sullivan

Learning's All in Our Head, And Always Was!



To all the 2020 graduands, congrats! And for the rest of us grads, future and past, let's rest on our virtual laurels for a moment and consider the conquest that's been. Many of our peers would shudder to attempt distance education. AU is not for the faint of heart or slack of skill. We learn how to learn by evolving our scholarly selves amidst our normal lives. And, unlike a new hobby, it's not always fun and games. When the going gets rough we find out the key truth of learning online: it's all in our head! A degree from AU isn't just something given to you, it *is* you. And only the brightest and most outstanding possess the intangible temerity to succeed at distance education.

This year's virtual convocation provides a shot at delving deeper into the virtual nature of life itself at the outset of the '20s. Merriam Webster defines virtual as that which is "being such in essence or effect though not formally recognized or admitted"; the word carries an almost, but not quite, sort of sensibility. Crucially, the dictionary only invokes computers in the secondary definition of the word. A hollow thud of disappointment can easily resound through our being when we realize that, just as some ignorant folks might discount our AU degree as somehow not from a real university, we now have to

contend with how we don't get a real graduation. Aww. Yet, recall the frog marches of high school graduations. On these occasions, it seems homogeneity supersedes individuality and excellence. Perhaps, then, a virtual convocation is more real than a real one, if only because we each get to attend it from our own home soil and study shed (proverbial or literal). Grad marches have a certain shepherd-like quality to them anyway, right. And AU, being above all about our individual abilities, we might as well finish off with a virtual convocation. Not because we aren't equal or superior to brick and mortar grads but because the virtual essence of learning becomes us as we ascend to academic glory.

Academic Nobility: How Excellent We Are

AU effectively deploys noble language in an attempt to evaluate virtual convocation: "AU's virtual convocation will include the historic and traditional elements of our in-person convocation with the updated and modern twist of being delivered virtually and simultaneously to this year's graduands across the globe." We've been treated like real human beings throughout our journey, more than can be said for many at the largest university here in BC that I shall leave unnamed, so why not have a graduation that combines past pomp and circumstance with the glitz of technomysteries from the future?

Plus, who knows, if the earth's polarity shifts we might all be back to typewriters in a jiffy! A nod to tradition is all we can expect from our current culture anyway; something borrowed and something blue only means so much in a hall stuffed with folks furtively checking their blue screens under disheveled caps and gowns. So, let's enjoy what we have at AU, even if we can't attend a traditional convocation.

Critical Thinking: The Substrate of Scholarly Success

The rubber meets the road at this year's convocation because we get to see our culture in a moment of flux. Yet the more things change, the more life remains poetic and unmappable. Surely there's more to us at a virtual level than digital mimicry of an imagined authentic experience. What about that unplaceable whimsy that triggers shivers down our spines and along our thighs such that our whole world quakes along hitherto-uncharted metaphysical fault lines. If convocation is really an event that frames a triumphant life moment, it's the ephemeral details, those uncounted internal gasps of awe at what we've done, that matter most. Those priceless mental moments, even given a virtual and temporal abstraction filtered through the technosphere, transcend their mode of conduction. At such junctures, with apologies to Marshall McLuhan, the medium is not the message.

So, whatever the future holds for graduands and the rest of us at AU, let's recall that, when we attend virtual convocation, we are participating in the times even as our tiny minds transcend the hegemonic realities of our epoch. Education provides a window into other worlds and, above all, a new view down the rabbit hole of our own humble existence. What can be more edifying than learning how to see ourselves and our lives in new and more thoughtful ways? To this end, virtual convocation ought to succeed valiantly because it allows us to see the world of 2020 not only as it is but also as we may imagine it best can be improved for the future.

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

[While Natalia may have written the longest single article in 2020, this was one of the shortest written by our own Fly on the Wall, Jason Sullivan. Jason's articles are a mainstay of the Voice, often focusing on issues of identity, academia, and language, yet he still manages to connect them to the issues that are happening at the time. Such as in this nominated article from our October 2 issue, shortly after AU's first virtual convocation.]



Should You Learn a Foreign Language

Emily Viggiani



Canada is a bilingual country, officially. The numbers of bilingual or multilingual people are increasing in Canada as the world becomes more globalized. There are 920 million native Mandarin speakers, 463 million native Spanish speakers, and 342 million native Hindi speakers in the world. These are typically cited as the most international, or useful, languages in the world. However, in Canada, it is most common to learn French as a second language.

Languages are something of a status symbol in the “polyglot” community. In it, fluency is everyone’s end goal, but polyglots enjoy the journey just as much as reaping the benefits of their hard work. Whether they are watching a film in their target language or reading a book in it, language-learning can go much deeper than ten minutes on Duolingo per day. Polyglots take language-learning far more seriously. Many learn five or more languages at once.

Which Language Should You Choose?

The answer depends on your life’s circumstances. Are you from a family (or marrying into one) that speaks another language? Do you work in an office in which there is a commonly spoken language? Is there a language you just feel drawn toward? Then there’s the fact that not all the scripts are the same: not everyone uses the Roman script—the script that English and the Latin languages are written in. Some people do not have a hard time learning character scripts, and visual learners can learn these scripts (such as Thai) more easily. Another language-learning struggle is the tones for tonal languages (such as Vietnamese).

You Must Have Patience

Many people from an immigrant family have at least one relative who has lived in Canada for years and still only knows a few phrases in English or French. Yet, if you live in a country where a foreign language is spoken, you have the advantage of immersion. People who can only read books and watch films don’t have that same immersion, though immigration to a foreign country can be difficult to manage.

You’ll Make New Friends (and get more messages from potential dates... or creeps).

Making friends with people who speak your target language is a beautiful thing. You can meet so many people practising it on the internet. Many native speakers are extremely accommodating and eager to teach. However, don’t be surprised if your new language opens the doors to something more. Whether you welcome flirtations or not, the flirtations will come.

People will ask, “are you fluent yet?” All the time.

Monolinguals will not understand how long it takes to learn another language. Potential employers and hiring managers will ask, “but are you fluent?” Not giving a care that you’ve been learning for three years. Their impatience will wear on your patience. Don’t let it.

You’ll Learn More Than Just the Language.

Aside from the language, you may find you also learn cultural etiquette, popular media, history, and more. Some mixed languages (such as Tagalog, a Filipino language) paint a vivid picture of their country’s history just based on the root word. In Tagalog, cheese is keso—another spelling

of queso, the Spanish word for cheese. This tells us that there was no need for the word cheese before the Spanish came to the Philippines. As the world gets smaller, most languages are becoming more mixed.

It's a Great Quarantine Pass-time.

Learning another language is like opening another door. I know it's cliché to say that, but many job requirements will say that you need a foreign language to qualify. If you speak another language, there is more opportunity. What else were you going to do in lockdown, anyways?

Aspiring to be a journalist, Emily Viggiani decided to start with The Voice Magazine. It makes perfect sense given Emily's passion for the arts, she will be promoting artists within Athabasca University.

[Another example of how an article doesn't have to be long or deal with complex or controversial subjects to be good. This one, from our October 2nd issue, is like an executive summary of the various benefits you can gain from learning a language, and served me as the kick in the pants to make me take up Duo-Lingo again. While I didn't ask the student who nominated it for the reasons, I expect they're something similar.]

Homemade is Better Gnocchi Poutine

Chef Corey



Poutine is one of those iconic Canadian dishes. Some go kilometres to find good poutine. When the hot gravy melts the cheese, and the fries are crispy—so good! Here in Edmonton, there are a couple of places to get decent poutine. But what do you do when you have leftover mashed potatoes or maybe extra potatoes?

When I was writing my leftovers article a few weeks back, I was inspired to make up a new dish. Well, a new to me dish. In this recipe, I fused Italian Gnocchi and Canadian Poutine. It's not the deep-fried crispy fries, but it's still so good! As is, it's a very basic dish, but you could spruce it up a bit, say by adding some smoked brisket, Italian sausage, or even some leftover ham or turkey.

Using up leftovers is hard, but I hope that I can help you get inspired to try some new things with them! Enjoy!

Gnocchi Poutine

Ingredients:

Gnocchi:

4 large russet potatoes – peeled and diced
1 egg
1 – 2 cups flour

Gravy:

1L chicken or turkey stock
125g butter
125g flour

Poutine:

1-2 cups shredded or diced Mozza

Directions:**Gravy:**

- 1) Grab a medium-sized pot and heat it over high heat
- 2) Add butter and heat until it starts to foam
- 3) Add flour and stir until it forms a thick paste.
- 4) Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly
- 5) Add the stock and stir continuously to incorporate the roux
- 6) Add salt and pepper until you are happy with the taste.
- 7) Hold it until the gnocchi is done.

Gnocchi:

- 1) Peel the potatoes and dice them
- 2) Put the potatoes in a pot and cover with water
- 3) Bring to a boil over high heat
- 4) Boil until the potatoes fall apart easily
- 5) Strain them to remove the water
- 6) Put the potatoes in the bowl of a stand mixer (or a mixing bowl)
- 7) Turn the mixer to 3, using the paddle attachment, and whip them to break them up
- 8) Keep paddling for 2 minutes to cool the potatoes
- 9) Turn off the heat and scrape down the sides
- 10) Turn the mixer onto stir or its lowest setting and add your egg
- 11) While it is mixing, start adding your flour, 1 cup at a time. You might need more than 2 cups
- 12) Once the potatoes come together like a dough, stop the mixer
- 13) If it is still sticky, add more flour
- 14) Remove the mix to a floured surface and knead for one to two minutes
- 15) Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil while you complete the next portion
- 16) Cut the dough into four sections
- 17) Roll each section out into a ½ inch rope
- 18) Cut each rope into 1 – 1.5-inch pieces
- 19) Heat a frying pan over medium-high with some oil.
- 20) Once the pot of water is boiled, start adding the pieces
- 21) Once they start to float on the top, remove them to the frying pan, being careful as you're going to get some splatter.
- 22) Keep adding oil and gnocchi until you have boiled and fried all of it

Poutine:

- 1) Shred the cheese
- 2) Portion your gnocchi onto separate plates
- 3) Add the cheese
- 4) Top with the gravy
- 5) Enjoy

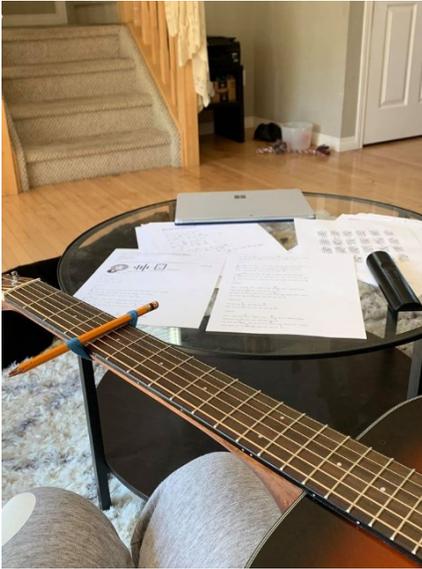
Chef Corey is a student in business management who first graduated from NAIT's Culinary Arts Program in 2007

[Who knew that we'd become a regular recipe magazine with a new one every week? But students have to eat, too, right? So it only makes sense why it happened, and why this one, from our November 13th issue, was nominated for the Best of 2020. If leftovers leading to cheese and gravy and pasta isn't a student meal, I don't know what is.]



Five New Hobbies to Start During the Quarantine Period

Xine Xu



Musical hobbies:

Having taken piano lessons at a young age, I've always been a fan of self-expression at the piano. It was a chance to be distanced from the bustle of everyday life and connect with myself. I found that even at the most anxious and stressful moments, I have always found solace in playing a tune. For other musical AU students, the quarantine period can be a great time to polish your musical talent. I found one way that kept motivating me to continue practicing my piano pieces was recording them for friends and family. For myself, having a dedicated Youtube channel means posting weekly content to help viewers stay engaged.

Home Chef

As you may have guessed from the "Not-so-Starving-Student" column, I'm a huge fan of creating my own recipes and experimenting with ethnic cuisines. Setting small goals such as preparing one new dish every day will not only teach you small tricks around the kitchen but also help keep your schedules interesting during quarantine. The entire process can feel like an adventure especially when you scout for the best ingredients in grocery stores to finally taste the fruit of your labor.

Writing

Needless to say, writing is one of my part-time passions. Despite not having a journalism degree or a Major in English, I found that creating writing and blogging can be a hobby for anyone. Especially during quarantine periods when stress and anxiety levels can be high. Writing is a way of voicing your thoughts in a constructive way. Moreover, from my personal experience, the more I write on a regular basis, the less often I experience writer's block.



Podcasting

Early during the quarantine, I invested in a good quality microphone to record my music covers, but also experimented with making podcasts for the first time. I find that this hobby helped me learn a lot about video and voice editing which can come in handy for a variety of projects. Podcasting can also be therapeutic at times. There are many instructional videos that teach beginners how to make quality podcasts for free. I found that unlike some other hobbies, podcasting takes time to learn and given the abundance of time during the quarantine, learning to podcast can be highly rewarding.



Jogging

Despite the closure of gyms and public workout spaces, there are a few healthy options to keep ourselves fit during the pandemic. While I follow Youtube body building enthusiasts for at-home exercises I can attempt, I found that with the warmer weather jogging outdoors was becoming more enjoyable. Having become more out of shape recently, I had to slowly increase my jogging capacity by a few extra minutes each day. Rather than tiring myself out quickly, I decided to aim for consistency each day.

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

[Of course, many of the articles over 2020 talked about dealing with COVID-19. This one, however, was probably noted for inclusion as part of the Best of 2020 because of the combination of personal and practical advice. Not just someone telling you what you can do, but a student exploring her options and letting you get a peak into what's been done.]



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Heather inquires about student funding for mature AB students taking one course at a time; responses indicate it's worth applying. Amoonah just finished a 3-year degree and wants to continue on to make it a 4-year; other students post tips to help her with next steps and timing.

Other posts include delaying exams, study tips, print versions of etexts, prepping home space for a ProctorU exam, and loads of questions from new students trying to navigate online learning without a map.

reddit

A student posts a mini-rant about outdated materials and references in some AU courses; responses are sympathetic, and one response indicates this happens at other universities, too.

Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets: "[#AthabascaU](#) currently has four massive open online courses (MOOCs) running to support those who may be looking to better their teaching or understanding of learning in an online space. Learning to learn online starts in just over a week t.co/Nxash3iB9O."

[@austudentsunion](#) tweets: "Yesterday we caught up with Councillor Darcie Fleming on our [#Instagram](#) page! Darcie is a 30-year veteran of the non-profit sector and is pursuing a second career in Psychology through her [@AthabascaU](#) studies while volunteering. For more: <https://bit.ly/2XfQWLn> [#Igo2AU](#) [#canpse](#)."



Masking the Danger

Dear Barb:

My 80-year-old grandmother is in the hospital with COVID-19, she was on a ventilator for almost two weeks and is now recovering. No one in the family has been able to visit her. We are all heartbroken that she would have to suffer like this. She has always been a loving caring grandmother and mother. We don't know how or where she contracted the virus. She always wore a mask, but at that time when she would have contracted the virus not a lot of people were wearing masks. I wonder if my grandmother could have been spared this experience if wearing a mask was mandatory at that time.

I am writing because I have been reading a lot on social media about people who do not want to wear a mask. They feel wearing a mask is infringing on their freedoms and rights, plus they are questioning the benefits and risks of wearing a mask. I feel that since we are not experts, and this is not something we have experienced before, that we should listen to the experts. I know they are not 100% sure of all the facts, but I'm willing to bet they know a lot more than I do. I just don't understand why people are so angry about wearing a mask. Are they so selfish that they don't

care about the possibility of spreading this deadly virus to others? Thanks, Jane.

Hi Jane:

I don't think people are selfish, they are just confused. The advice seems to change from week to week and medical experts do not always agree on what is the right thing to do, especially about masks. Earlier in the pandemic Canada's Chief Medical Officer said that wearing non medical masks was not necessary, but by early April this advice had changed. It was then discovered that wearing face masks may prevent the spread of the virus to others. Therefore the main purpose in wearing a mask was to protect others, rather than just preventing you from contracting the virus. Many people were of the belief that if they kept a distance from others it was not necessary for them to wear a mask. This protocol has evolved and presently wearing or not wearing of masks is different from province to province and city to city. Some cities are making wearing of masks mandatory, while others are leaving the choice to the individual or the business. Wearing a mask will most likely not provide 100% protection from contracting covid, but they do offer some protection, along with washing your hands regularly and maintaining physical distance. Personally I am with you, some protection is definitely better than no protection. Whether mandatory or not, it's a good idea to wear a mask when out in public places.

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.

[A Best of 2020 wouldn't be complete without a Dear Barb. This one was chosen from our July 31 issue in part because of how relevant it remains, especially as we learn about new strains which may be vaccine resistant and watch how the disease continues to ravage the United States. That makes it part of the Best of 2020. Let's hope it's not part of the Best of 2021 too.]



Chazz Bravado
A Word to the Wise Male Feminist

Wanda Waterman



So I go to the beach to try and hook up with some chicky-poops...



...and I end up tripping over a lovely pair of gams.



So I fall over onto some big guy's patookus, and he ups and clocks me so hard...



...my Ray-Bans fly away and bounce off an old lady's nose.



Naturally the Chazz Man had to whip off a witty remark about the size of her schnozz.



So today's lesson, kiddies, is always remember to social distance.

[I like Chazz. Or more precisely, I like to laugh at Chazz. He's a perfect caricature of so many things, and a reminder that humour can be impolitic without being insulting--except to Chazz, of course. But I doubt he'd notice. From our August 14th issue, this selection was all mine. Best of 2020? I think so, and that's one of the privileges of being the editor.]

The information on this page is provided by the AU Students' Union. The Voice does not create this content. Contact AUSU at services@ausu.org with any questions about this article.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Jan 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Feb 1](#)
- **Jan 14:** [AUSUnights Virtual Student Social](#)
- **Jan 15:** [Feb degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Jan 20:** [AUSU Public Council Meeting](#)
- **Jan 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Mar](#)
- **Feb 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Feb 1](#)

AU Tuition Increases

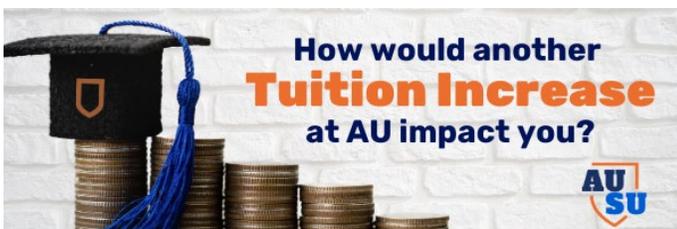
Tuition is likely to increase at Athabasca University next year, despite strong opposition by AUSU at meetings with the university and at the Board of Governors throughout the fall and into the new year.

The Government of Alberta changed the rules last year to allow for three years of tuition increases at 7% each year. Since AU is an Alberta institution, this impacts all AU students. At the same time, they also drastically cut university funding at Alberta universities, including Athabasca University, starting in 2019 with additional cuts being planned for 2021. The Government of Alberta has called on all institutions to look to tuition to help cover that gap in funding, while at the same time has also increased interest rates on student loans, cut tuition tax credits, and cut student job programs.

Athabasca University will likely decide in January how much to increase tuition for September 2021, and we are worried the institution will seek the maximum increase of 7%. Every step along the way, AUSU has argued against the need for an increase and emphasized the impact of such an increase on our members, especially in the midst of a global pandemic. AUSU has also advocated to the Government of Alberta to take another look at budgetary decisions that led to the increases and will be engaging in ongoing advocacy on this topic.

Help us advocate for you by taking our quick poll about how a tuition increase would impact you.

Find out more and take our poll [here](#).



AUSUNights – Trivia!

AUSUnights are a great opportunity to connect with AU fellow students through Zoom, play some fun trivia games, and get a chance to win some prizes and swag from your Students' Union! Events are now being held on the second Thursday of every month!

Upcoming Events:

- Thursday, January 14, 2020 at 5:00 MT (7:00pm ET)
- Thursday, February 11, 2020 at 5:00 MT (7:00 pm ET)
- Thursday, March 11, 2020 at 5:00 MT (7:00pm ET)

RSVP to ausu@ausu.org for an invite!



AUSU 2SLGBTQIA Discord Server

In the spirit of inclusivity and support for our unique membership, AUSU has launched a new Discord Server for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at Athabasca University!

[Click here to join the Discord Server!](#)



CLASSIFIEDS

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

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