



The
Voice
Magazine

VOLUME I

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

The Voice Magazine: Volume I

IN-SIGHT PUBLISHING

Published by In-Sight Publishing
In-Sight Publishing
Langley, British Columbia, Canada

in-sightjournal.com

First published in parts by The Voice Magazine,
This edition published in 2018 via In-Sight Publishing.

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Published in Canada by In-Sight Publishing, British Columbia, Canada, 2018
Distributed by In-Sight Publishing, Langley, British Columbia, Canada

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Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

No official catalogue record for this book.

Jacobsen, Scott Douglas, Author

The Voice Magazine: Volume I/Scott Douglas Jacobsen

pages cm

Includes bibliographic references, footnotes, and reference style listing.

In-Sight Publishing, Langley, British Columbia, Canada

Published electronically from In-Sight Publishing in Langley, British Columbia, Canada

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Dedications

I feel honored to write for the nation's most prominent online postsecondary institution student magazine or newspaper with interviews including the previous interim president and the current president, several members of the community, and then to report on the news of the day. All with the mentorship and guidance of the irreplaceable Karl Low with background support from the inimitable Jodi Campbell. I am thankful for the collaborative work with Dr. Junye Wang, Shawna Wasylshyn, Dr. Peter MacKinnon, Dr. Lorelei Hanson, Anita Rau Badami, Dr. Maiga Chang, Louise Baptiste, Ms. Megan Hall, and Dr. Alain May.

Scott

Meeting the Minds – Dr. Junye Wang

January 15, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

This week, making up for the holidays, we've got two installments of our Meeting the Minds column. This interview with Dr. Junye Wang was conducted by student Scott Jacobsen. Dr. Wang has come to AU as a research chair from the Campus Alberta Innovates Program

How did you become involved in Athabasca University?

My basic research is on multi-scale and multidisciplinary modelling. The Campus Alberta Innovates Program (CAIP) program provides long-term funding so that I can focus on development of an ambitious framework: the modelling framework of integrated terrestrial and aquatic systems.

This will lead to a model of integrated watershed management, and recommendations for land- and water-use decisions for Albertans and Canadians.

You are a CAIP Chair, which is different from a Canada Research Chair. What does this position entail in terms of tasks and responsibilities?

The CAIP Chair in Computational Sustainability and Environmental Analytics provides leadership and vision to establish an interdisciplinary research program in the specified area of environmental sustainability and environmental analytics, promote excellence in research, foster national and international research collaboration and contribute to the reputation of Athabasca University in this area as a leading centre of scholarly excellence to attract high quality students and visiting scholars.

What is your professional area of expertise?

It is hard to say what my expertise is. In practice, I have worked/studied on (chemical, aeronautical, energy, and computing) engineering, environments and agroecosystem for 30 years. Although my research work has been applied to very different problems from chemical and mechanical engineering (e.g., fuel cells and gas turbines) to biogeochemical processes in agroecosystems (e.g., soil physics and nutrient cycling).

These modelling work are all essentially based on three types of transports (mass, energy and momentum) and two types of reactions (chemical and biological). Therefore, this may be my professional area.

What is your teaching philosophy?

Because I have worked/studied on different disciplines, I realized that in the world of science and engineering, there were an infinite number of problems to learn, and, of course, it was impossible for anybody to study all of those that were related to his/her fields in one university. Hence, my

teaching philosophy is summarized as a Chinese proverb: “Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.”

As a teacher, rather than giving my students the solution to their problems all the time, I would like it to be that my students are capable of analysing and evaluating on their own. Students need to learn the fundamental content of the science and engineering courses. But beyond that I hope to facilitate the acquisition of life-long learning skills, foster critical thinking, and develop problem-solving strategies.

Therefore, instead of searching for and solving all kinds of sample problems, they need to focus on the process of problem-solving in their science and engineering courses, and thus gain the ability to solve any problem whenever they need to do so. This will guide them toward becoming independent thinkers and lifetime self-instructors.

How do you promote capacities/skills of research students as a CAIP Chair?

As a CAIP Chair, I have promoted research-driven teaching and learning at AU. A cutting-edge research project is usually something that faces various challenges. Thus, it is an excellent opportunity for students to acquire the skills of critical thinking and problem-solving through real problems-driven learning.

Through the cutting-edge research projects, research students can be involved in discussions by asking interesting questions on the project or by facing challenging concepts and, sometimes, paradoxes from the real world.

Many cutting-edge research projects require teamwork, which helps students view different problems from different perspectives and disciplines. Thus, students can learn how the theory works and why different expertise and skills from different disciplines are required.

What research are you doing?

The Athabasca river basin (ARB) is ecologically and economically vital for the development and sustainability of northern Alberta communities. Industrial development and climate change are affecting both the ecological sustainability and the well-being of people along the river.

While the oilsands offer huge economic opportunities, much remains unknown about the impact of resource development on the environment and society. My research is to establish a modeling framework of integrated biogeochemical and hydrological processes to interpret data and environmental projections.

This framework will bridge knowledge gaps of dynamic interactions among nutrients (e.g., carbon and nitrogen), water, pollutants, soil and oil sands, vegetation, and climate.

This can deepen our understanding of the integrated river basin systems including, but not limited to, the land and water, which can determine future trends and relationships from multiple land-use activities in the basin.

It can also identify key factors of the cumulative effects of agricultural and unconventional oil and gas production for watershed management. This will provide a new tool for how we might better use land to manage soil, air, and water, and make recommendations for policy and to aid the decision-making of oil companies.

What has your research discovered?

There are also major knowledge gaps in how tailings pollutants will degrade and diffuse through biogeochemical and hydrological processes above and below ground once they are put into a reclamation site.

We are expanding the capacity of agroecosystem modelling and computational sustainability for assessing the environmental impacts of agricultural and unconventional oil and gas (oilsands and hydraulic fracturing) production on the agroecosystem.

Our initialized results have demonstrated that the framework can identify key factors for watershed management across Athabasca river basin, but more work is needed for a policy support tool.

A lot of your research will need interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary efforts. What is the process of incorporating interdisciplinary work in the midst of specialist work like for you?

A river basin is a complex system in which natural processes (e.g., hydrological and biogeochemical) and social processes (e.g., human activities) interact. It is necessary to incorporate interdisciplinary researches if people want to understand such a complex system.

In practice, it is not easy to incorporate different disciplines since researchers work usually on their own disciplines. Though we know these experts from different areas should collaborate to address the problems, different areas may use different methods and terminologies. A question is how different specialists could communicate effectively.

What interfaces are between disciplines? In spite of clear boundaries between different subject courses, there are no such clear interfaces in the real world problems. My multidisciplinary background may help to communicate among different specialists to find these interfaces that foster efficiency collaboration.

Any advice for students on becoming involved in cutting-edge research?

Students can study and apply fundamental knowledge of the science and engineering in cutting-edge research. Cutting-edge research includes processes of innovation and creation. This is an excellent opportunity to help students acquire the key skills of life-long learning, foster critical thinking, and develop problem-solving through the processes of innovation and creation.

They can learn how the theory works and why different expertise and skills are required. Moreover, a cutting-edge research project will promote teamwork and collaboration that helps

students view different problems from different perspectives and disciplines. These skills may be more important than single knowledge in future career development and will be of life-long benefit.

Presidential Interview – AUSU

January 29, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

The last time we talked to the AUSU President was just before the Council held its by-election. This week, Scott Jacobsen has a more personal interview into what makes AUSU President Shawna Wasylyshyn tick.

What is the story prior to becoming an Athabasca University (AU) student?

I had a successful career as a District Sales Manager for a company I loved! I realized that the chances of moving forward from that position or transitioning to a similar one without a business degree were slim, and then I found AU!

I had been studying political science online through the UofS, but transferred to the Faculty of Business at AU and enrolled in the Bachelor of Management program.

What are the reasons for choosing AU over other universities for you?

Flexibility. I have had 3 children since becoming a student at AU and I was able to take full courses while on maternity leave. AU allows me to balance all of the priorities in my life while completing my studies. I am able to continue with my studies while supporting my family and juggling all of my responsibilities!

What tasks and responsibilities come with leadership of the Athabasca University Student Union (AUSU)?

The list of tasks and responsibilities in student leadership are much too long to list here! The responsibility is something I take very seriously. On a daily basis, I am required to be the voice of over 25,000 students and ensure that voice is heard.

Often, it means asking tough questions, and at times I have to be more forceful than I like. It's not easy to walk into a room full of University Administration who are all saying the same thing, and be strong enough to speak up and inform them that students disagree with them.

Thankfully, I'm not easily intimidated and I am inspired by the knowledge that AUSU members trust in me to speak on their behalf.

What is the experience of being a working mother of three, and one step-child, while a student?

It's busy! The key to my success is to stay organized. Planning ahead is very important and sticking to the plan is essential. I plan everything from meals, kids' activities, studying and work.

With that said, I have learned to accept that sometimes the plan has to go out the window because a child may get sick or an emergency could come up at work. It's a constant balancing act.

Any insights into the differences for working-student mothers compared to working mothers, student mothers, or stay-at-home mothers?

When You're a Mom, your kids come first. Mothers are always faced with the challenge of how to realize their own dreams, while encouraging the dreams of their children. I always say that every Mom is a working Mom, the difference is whether or not you get paid!

Involvement of other parents and grandparents and the ages of children are big factors in the amount of studying a Mom can get done as well. I got a lot more studying done when I had one baby who napped all the time!

Now that my children are aged 5, 3 and 2, it is a lot more difficult to find quiet pockets of time to sit down and study.

Any advice for aspiring students, student-mothers, or working-student mothers with political interests?

My advice to all students is to set a goal, and make a plan to achieve it. Be willing to accept that you may face roadblocks along the way to your goal, but don't give up.

Theodore Roosevelt said "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty? I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well."

Presidential Interview – AU’s Interim President, Part I

February 19, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Student Scott D. Jacobsen managed to get some time with Athabasca University’s interim president Mr. Peter MacKinnon. Scott interviewed him over a wide set of topics with the president, and the result is this three-part interview that we’re happy to present in The Voice Magazine.

Scott: You hold a number of distinctions in terms of educational background, previous stations, and academic and national honors.

In 2014, you spoke on the honor to work for the advancement of the Athabasca University (AU) community, the benefits of online education in provision of education for those that would not otherwise have it, a personal hero in Nelson Mandela, the need for leadership to make vision practical and compelling, and preference for Starbucks, Star Trek, The Beatles, iPhone, and dogs in a previous video interview published online (Athabasca U, 2014).

You spoke on some general issues relevant to the AU community and to let individual members know you.

With some of this background, since arrival in AU as the Interim President, with respect to online education, what similarities and differences seem relevant for some comparisons to the traditional brick-and-mortar institutions?

President MacKinnon: The first differences coming into a position like this one would be the differences in the online university environment compared to more campus-based institutions. Those differences are profound. Here in this community, of the university’s more than 500 academic employees, faculty and tutors, fewer than 10 live in Athabasca.

Our students come here for convocation, and from time to time for some work on campus in laboratories, particularly, but you do not have the same day-to-day, face-to-face, contact with your faculty colleagues, and with your students.

The other difference and the one that, frankly, I prize most about being here is the mission of the university. For me, at least, in an increasingly online dominated world, the openness of Athabasca University is a profound and positive part of its existence.

We never close the doors on anyone! 78% of students tell us that without Athabasca University they either cannot access post-secondary education, or would have more than the usual difficulty in doing so.

Scott: In Davos, Switzerland, from January 20th to 23rd, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke on issues related to the economic impacts of Canada's resources - wood, coal, and oil - and Canada's resourcefulness sometimes called human capital.

Now, to relate this to previous statements, if students with the inability to attend a post-secondary institution can attend a post-secondary institution – based on the 78% you mentioned before, how important is Canada's largest online provider of education to the Albertan and Canadian economies? Of course, the provincial economy embeds in the national economy.

President MacKinnon: That's a great question. I have strongly believed since coming here that Athabasca University is an important national university as well as an important Campus Alberta university.

If you look at student body demographics, you see students come from every province in the country, and large numbers of them from outside the province. So, yes!

Athabasca University plays an important role, not in Alberta alone, but in the country. In terms of adding to the human capital or the resourcefulness of our population, this is an important university.

Scott: To continue the line of thought from the first question, based on the differences provided, what best exhibit the greatest strengths of online education?

President MacKinnon: A great strength is the reach. The fact is when you can reach into people's communities, when you can reach into their homes, when you can reach them where they work, when you can reach them wherever it is that they are. Online education provides accessibility and improves and increases accessibility.

Scott: What were your objectives when you took on the interim role?

President MacKinnon: My goal was to certainly contribute in whatever way I could to advancing the mission of this university. When I arrived, it was clear to me that there were some sustainability issues. These are documented in full in the Presidential Task Force Report at Athabasca University (Athabasca University, 2015).

I wanted to put the issues of our sustainability *on the record*. They were discussed before by the way, long before I came here, but it was important to put them on the record in a disciplined way to be dealt with in a disciplined way. That has been my goal, and that continues to be my goal.

Scott: The Presidential Task Force Report at AU contained four possible options for the future of AU. In terms of the options for the future of the AU community, what seems like the most probable one (Athabasca University, 2015)?

President MacKinnon: Those options were not meant to be exhaustive, or a full list, but they

were meant to challenge people to talk about them as some among all the options. They were not mutually exclusive either.

For example, one of the options was to complete an educational review and a business process review. Those reviews are now underway. We expect reports on them by the end of April. So, that option has been implemented.

Some of the other possibilities included relationships with other institutions. Those relationships could be an association, an affiliation, a federation, shared service arrangements, or contracting out arrangements.

Those matters continue to be on the table as potential contributions to our sustainability in the future. Another one: this is a national institution as well as a Campus Alberta institution.

We have eCampusAlberta, a consortium of the universities in Alberta for online learning. We have eCampusOntario, eCampus Manitoba, Thomson Rivers University, (which embraced the former open British Columbia Open University), and TÉLUQ University in Quebec.

We have a lot of provincial initiatives in the world of open or, at least, online education. One of the points the task force report made was that, rather than hunker down behind provincial boundaries, there were opportunities for more in the way of national initiatives that could present a more ambitious Canadian face to the world in open online education.

(Come back next week to see the second of this three-part series)

A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad. He researches in the Learning Analytics Research Group, Lifespan Cognition Psychology Lab, and IMAGE Psychology Lab, and with the UCI Ethics Center.

Trudeau, The World Economic Forum, & Athabasca University

February 26, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Athabasca University (AU) is in line with the future of education and the future economy. The future of education credentials, knowledge, and skills. The future of the economy human capital with creativity, education, and experience.

Human capital investments are an issue for students coming out of university, and employers looking for suitable candidates or employees. A salient set of facts for fellow students on track to complete their education at AU when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau represented Canada at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland from January 20th to 23rd to talk about the future economy.

Trudeau's attendance at international events gives the basis to plan and negotiate with other world leaders for the future economy, and to present the strengths of the Canadian economy. But if the future economy is based on education, then the future of education will be the future economy by implication.

In turn, plans made on a global platform with other nations influence the trajectory of Canadian provinces and territories, and their respective universities such as AU. The WEF gave the opportunity to express the strengths of the Canadian economy.

Trudeau spoke on the shift from weight given to Canadian resources and transitioning more into Canadian human capital, "My predecessor wanted you to know Canada for its resources. I want you to know Canadians for our resourcefulness."

The WEF meeting was, in part, based on the new and ongoing industrial revolution, the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It builds on the previous industrial revolutions that used steam-, electric-, and information-based technologies.

It will increasingly incorporate cyber-physical systems. Trudeau's statement described the shift in the Canadian economic landscape from natural resources, "Canada for its resources," to human capital, "Canada for our resourcefulness."

Canada remains the most educated, or credentialed, rather, population in the world (Grossman, 2012), and AU is the largest online provider of education in Canada. In other words, AU is the largest online human capital investment in the country.

Insofar as Canadian resources are concerned, the drop in oil prices has hurt the resource-based sector of the economy of Alberta, but not necessarily the human capital sector. Students, in general, express concerns about acquisition of work upon graduation from university.

Employers express concerns over potential workers with relevant qualifications coming out of university. AU could, and should, play an even greater role in this transition towards a more balanced mixed economy: resources and resourcefulness.

That is, AU should perform an important intermediary role in the future of education and, by implication, the future of the economy in filling the jobs (worker concerns) and skills (employer concerns) gaps with the rapid development of this knowledge economy.

Human capital will increasingly become our greatest strength in the province and the country, and the international marketplace. AU resides at this juncture, and Prime Minister Trudeau statements on the global stage align with AUs purposes in education and education's connection to the economy.

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A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad. He researches in the Learning Analytics Research Group, Lifespan Cognition Psychology Lab, and IMAGE Psychology Lab, and with the UCI Ethics Center.

Presidential Interview – AU’s Interim President, Part II

February 26, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Student Scott D. Jacobsen managed to get some time with Athabasca University’s interim president Mr. Peter MacKinnon. Scott interviewed him over a wide set of topics with the president, and the result is this three-part interview that we’re happy to present in The Voice Magazine. You can find the first part here.

Last year, what were some of the major events of 2015 for AU in research, celebrations, or general momentous occasions?

I always cite convocation. Convocation takes place over three days in June. Convocation is a special event at all universities. It has a particular flavor at Athabasca University, in part, because for so many it is the first time students have met faculty members and fellow students in person. They come together to celebrate over those three days. That it’s an open, online university makes a coming together particularly special.

I’ve said in many settings that, in, my academic life, I have attended well over 100 convocations. The convocations at Athabasca University are very special because they feature the individual stories of our graduates and the barriers that they had to overcome to undertake post-secondary education, and I find convocation the most memorable time of the year.

In a previous interview for the Voice, you were asked about the likelihood of a distance-based Law School (Tynes, 2015). What seems like the chances or odds of this at this point in time through AU?

Some excellent work has been done at Athabasca University, especially in terms of mapping how this could be done. We attracted some excellent support from the legal profession and within the university.

To mount a law program, you need support – not only of the university, not only of the community, but of the governance and the legal profession across the country. We are at work there too.

Insofar as AU aims to transition to a research-oriented post-secondary institution, graduate level research seems well-established with undergraduate research in continued development, for example, research groups and laboratories, what initiatives seem ‘down the road’ for 2016 to assist in research at AU, especially with the international statements

by Prime Minister Trudeau on the necessity for utilization by the international community of Canadian human capital or resourcefulness (The Canadian Press, 2016)?

I don't see research and teaching as dichotomies. An essential part of the university experience is acquiring a capacity for inquiry, which is what research is all about. We expect academic personnel to be effective in teaching.

However, to be effective in university-level teaching, you need to have a capacity for further inquiry, which is what *research is all about*. So, in any university course there should be a merger between these two ideas: being taught and further inquiry. Research is part of the life-blood of the institution for all who work in its academic activities.

Something comes to mind. The phrases "lifelong learning" or "education for lifelong learning" seems to mirror the merger of standardized learning and research-based endeavors. I would add to that, by the way.

In the context of lifelong learning, we sometimes in the university world have been captive to the language of job-ready teaching and graduates - preparation for the world beyond the university. Sometimes, we have overdone the idea.

I emphasize the language of work adaptability in lifelong learning, which may feature more than one – often several – jobs over the course of a working life. Job adaptability means an important creative capacity to adapt to different working circumstances. The university's fundamental purpose of educating the critical faculties becomes salient.

The age of AU undergraduates in 2010-2011 at least, is around 28-29 and graduate students around 38-39. 2/3rds of which are women. In the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report, Canada ranks 30th out of 145, and in education, we are number one in the world in terms of that same index (World Economic Forum, 2015).

With Athabasca having 2/3rds of undergraduates and graduates combined as women it appears we're reflective (more than the national or international average) of international women's rights metrics, or gender gap rankings. How does online education affect possible attractiveness to women as opposed to men for presentation and accessibility of education?

Online education is important for all. We can reach into rural communities, into homes, into employment settings, and wherever people have interest in furthering their education. Maybe, and I emphasize the word "maybe" because I haven't done the research that would be required, we have tapped into, in these years, a pent up demand for online education, which has seen a lot of women respond to the opportunity. Now, that is more speculation than evidence, but it is speculation that I would be interested in testing.

You were an undergraduate student, graduate student, and practitioner of law for 23 years. What advice seems relevant to undergraduate students, graduate students, and as those in, or about to head into, their professional life based upon graduation?

[Laughing] Let me respond to your question in this way, my life in university was a simpler life than the ones now. Other than in the summer, I did not have employment commitments during the school year. I did not have family commitments at the time. I remember my pathways as being relatively easy compared to today.

So, in that sense, it would be presumptuous for me to offer advice. What I would say to *anyone* in the world of education is to be open to the future, to the possibilities of the future, to embracing the different experiences that are afforded through education, and to take maximum advantage of the opportunities to learn, those will remain as fundamental to success in the future as they have been in the past.

You mentioned Nelson Mandela as a hero in a previous interview. Why him?

When you think about the 20th century, and you think the names that come to mind, the great names of the 20th century. What name? What person has overcome obstacles, has achieved mightily, and has done so in such a wonderful spirit of magnanimity? So, with Nelson Mandela, a quarter of a century or more as a prisoner, struggling against deeply entrenched inequality, being instrumental in overturning that inequality, and in setting an example, not of achievement alone, but an example of *humanity* that I think was unsurpassed in the 20th century, and that's why I mentioned him.

What seems like something everyone, and another thing no one, knows about you?

Without violating my own privacy from that question [Laughing], I would say that's a good question. What would nobody know about me? Probably, some of my closest friends would know this, but few would know what a devoted fan of baseball I am. I am a baseball enthusiast. I follow the game closely. And I love the game.

It was the only sport I played reasonably well as a young person. I was a poor hockey player. I was too small for football, or, at least, to play football well. And, when I was growing up, soccer was not a significant North American sport. I played baseball. I loved it. And I love it to this day, and not many people would know that.

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Presidential Interview – AU’s Interim President, Peter MacKinnon, Part III

March 4, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Scott D. Jacobsen managed to get some time with Athabasca University’s interim president Mr. Peter MacKinnon. Scott interviewed the president over a wide set of topics, and the result is this three-part interview that we’re happy to present in The Voice Magazine. This is the third part of the series, you might also enjoy the first and second parts.

Coming into 2016, what initiatives should members of the AU community expect in the spring, summer, fall, and winter seasons?

I think the initiative of a presidential search is the single most important initiative on our agenda for 2016. The committee which advises the Board of Governors on this search has been established. It is an excellent committee.

It has conducted consultations already in Athabasca, in Edmonton, in Calgary, faculty staff, with unions, with others, consultations in the community of Athabasca itself. It is very important for this university to identify and to appoint an excellent president.

You engaged with appellate cases in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal and Supreme Court of Canada. What have these kinds of experiences at the apogee of the Canadian law system taught you?

Humility, I always thought of it as important for law professors, which I was for 23 years of my life, it was important for you to be anchored, not just in the academy and our law schools, but to be anchored in professional work too.

So, I was licensed to practice law in two provinces: Ontario and Saskatchewan. I sought opportunities. There can’t be too many because you have full-time commitments, as well, to the university, which I did, but I always was on the lookout for opportunities which would broaden and deepen my understanding of law and the legal system.

This included opportunities to participate in cases. One of the first things taught to an individual is humility. You discover sometimes that your best arguments, and the best answers to questions of judges, you discover on the way home from the hearing. [Laughing]

So, the experiences enriched my capacity to teach law and to research in law. It also taught me how diverse the legal world is, and one should approach it with openness and humility.

You do have a literary background, co-editing three books and writing one. (The three co-edited books were *After Meech Lake*, *Elected Boundaries: Legislatures, Courts and Electoral Values*, as well as *Citizenship, Diversity and Pluralism*.)

Your solely authored book was *University Leadership and Public Policy*. In brief, in terms of themes what were some of the general ideas and arguments presented in these texts?

They were all different. *After Meech Lake* came out of a conference that I was involved in, and helped organize, in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord back in the early 90s, so the goal there was to bring people together.

It was the first major conference after the collapse of the accord. It was to bring people together to talk about “What now?” for Canada given that the Meech lake Accord has not been accepted, and, of course, the book contains contributions of many outstanding Canadians to that discussion.

The second work reflected an interest that we had at the University of Saskatchewan. Both in the department of political science and in the college of law, that we had, in democracy and the meaning of the vote, and electoral boundaries.

How they are drawn, where they are drawn, what influences are at work have a very important effect on the status of the vote, and the effectiveness of the vote, and so, that was a big interest there.

Citizenship, Diversity and Pluralism was the third volume that grew out of a major conference. I was involved in it. It was from the perspective of the year close to 2,000. What does citizenship look like in a world of diversity and pluralism? What do we mean when we talk of citizenship? What are its common and unchanging attributes? What are its evolving attributes?

The fourth volume I wrote here. Looking back, when you are a university president you encounter so many fairly substantial public policy issues. Who should pay for post-secondary education? What should the relationships between universities and governments be? What should the relationships between universities and commercial influences be? How should we appoint our leaders? What should we expect of our leaders?

These are fundamental questions. They are fundamental in universities. They are fundamental public policy questions. And if you were a university president, as I was for 13 years, you have the opportunity to encounter these issues. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to reflect on them, and to write a book. So, those were the influences at work in those publications.

You were the Dean of Law at the University of Saskatchewan for 10 years too. What tasks and responsibilities come along with being the dean as opposed to a president?

A dean is a leader of a particular faculty. You are responsible for the arrangement and the oversight of particular faculty’s academic activities. So, when I was a dean at the University of

Saskatchewan's College of Law, I had overall responsibility for ensuring that the college's academic programs and activities were effectively undertaken.

You're there. You're on site. You are there with your faculty. You are there with your students. You participate in the program. Throughout my time as a dean, I taught two courses, and so you are on site, as it were, in the academic work of the college. That's how I would describe the work of the dean.

In contrast, the president is working for the institution as a whole. You have a broader set of responsibilities. You have a more external role. The biggest difference, I would say, is that you are more distant from the day-to-day teaching and research activities that dominate your life as a professor, and even as a dean.

Your bio says that you were chair of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada from 2003-2005, served for five years on the Science, Technology and Innovation Council of Canada, and continues to serve on the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on the Public Service; the Chief Justice of Canada's Advisory Committee to the Canadian Judicial Council; the Board of the Council of Canadian Academies; the Board of the Canadian Stem Cell Foundation; the Board of the Global Institute for Food Security; the Board of Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown, PEI; and as Chair of the Honours Advisory Council in Saskatchewan" (Athabasca University, 2014). This is a very, very broad sweep of both experience and stations.

In terms of the stations themselves, how does one go about acquiring these positions or these stations? Connected to that, what experience, and some of them were for many years, does each teach you?

It should first be said that all of these positions are unpaid positions. They are public service. They are opportunities to provide the service in a particular sphere on activity, and you do not apply for them so much as be open to them. Invitations come along the way.

And if you judge it to be something to which you can make a contribution, it is important that you, where you can, try to do so. So, I see all of these activities to which you have referred, I see them all as public service, and I see them as being areas that my background prepared me to help in.

Lastly, you earned the Officer of the Order of Canada, a Queen's Council, a recipient of the Canadian Bar Association Distinguished. In addition, you have honorary degrees from Dalhousie, Victoria, U of IT, Queen's, Memorial, and Regina universities.

Each of these, to have even a single honorary degree, would be enough renowned for someone to be appreciated by the community in addition to take that as a strong accomplishment. However, you have many of these in addition to others of similar or greater stature.

What does each of these, in particular, mean to you? How does this affect personal perspective on the nature of both honors and responsibilities to the community?

You certainly do not do what you do to acquire honors, but they do come along from time to time. And do you appreciate them? Yes. Do you enjoy them? Yes. So, it is nice when you are recognized for doing the work that you do.

That's what they mean to me. And It's really that. It is nice to be recognized, but do you not do the work to be recognized. But It's nice when it comes along. And I have been fortunate in that respect.

Thank you for your time, President MacKinnon.

It's been a pleasure, Scott.

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Meeting the Minds – Interviews with AU’s Educators

March 4, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Lorelei Hanson has authored two environmental studies courses and two geography courses at AU. She currently tutors her courses ENVS 200 and ENVS 435, and coordinates those as well ENVS 361 and GLST 243. She took some time to speak with Scott Jacobsen about her work with AU and general outlook in a two-part interview.

You are an Associate Professor and Academic Coordinator of Environmental Studies at Athabasca University and a Fellow of the Energy Futures Lab. In brief, what tasks and responsibilities come with the associate professorship for AU and the fellowship for EFL?

Like every academic across Canada I have three responsibilities: first, teaching; second, research; and third, community service. Teaching at Athabasca University includes tutoring and coordination. Coordination includes designing, updating, or revising courses, and, as a part of coordination, I also am developing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies.

As a Fellow of the Energy Futures Lab, I am expected to attend and actively participate in the in-person workshops. we’re also expected to develop and test out prototypes or innovations that will help us move to a new energy system. And finally I engage with people within my network around energy and the work of the EFL.

EFL comes from The Natural Step Canada supported by the Pembina Institute, Suncor Energy Foundation, the Banff Centre, and provincial government. Your expertise in “critical sustainability” seems relevant with respect to energy and climate change. Can you talk about that?

Critical sustainability is an analytical approach that starts from the premise that there are many definitions and uses of the term “sustainability” circulating, and each of those understandings offer quite different perspectives on and implications for both humanity and the non-human world.

So, critical sustainability is a lens of analysis that that can be applied to interrogate how is it that somebody is using the word sustainability, and what the implications of that are for how humans should interact with each other, as well as how we interact with and impact the non-human world.

As a professor of environmental studies and also an environmental and food activist, I bring that framework to my research and teaching, and how I think about what means to develop a more sustainable and resilient energy system.

How have your past research collaborations with the Alberta Climate Dialogue (ABCD) (Alberta Climate Dialogue, 2016) and the BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA) (BC-Alberts Social Economy Research Institute, 2016) influenced your work with the EFL?

Both ABCD and BATA are research projects that are winding down; we no longer have funding for these projects. Saying that, I am still actively involved with both of those networks. With respect to BALTA, we are developing a new research proposal on the role of social economy and social intermediaries in scaling up and down sustainability transition projects.

With respect to Alberta Climate Dialogue I am currently editing a book tentatively titled, *Changing the Conversations on Climate Change: Using Public Deliberation to Address the Wicked Problems of our Time*, which is a collection of essays that explore the tensions and the trade-offs that exist when you undertake deliberative engagement that addresses wicked issues like climate change.

I bring experience and knowledge about collaboration on issues like climate change and sustainability transition that I developed through my participation in ABCD and BALTA to the work I am now doing with the EFL.

What are Alberta's, and Canada's, major energy challenges?

One's perspective on that question depends very much on who You're talking to, right? In Alberta, those questions direct us to consider the current state of the economy and the extraction, production, use, sale, and transportation of energy.

When people respond to questions about Alberta's major energy challenges they often mention that we have to do this in a responsible manner, or a sustainable manner. If we go back to that notion of critical sustainability, for me, the question to ask is who is going to define those terms?

From my perspective, and building from the collaborative work that I did with ABCD and as a member of BALTA, as well as that which I am now doing with the EFL, we want to step back and say, "It is not for one person to define what is Alberta or Canada's major energy challenge."

The best way for us a province to respond to that question is to have a much broader discussion that starts with talking about what are the values that we really hold dear within our province and how can we plan an energy system that would work in accordance with those values.

Of course it is even more complicated than that within Alberta, because we don't get to plan that system all on our own; we work within the context of a larger energy system, both nationally as well as internationally.

So many of the key leverage points in the energy system we don't have control over. Nonetheless, considering our energy future does demand that we start to look at how we can influence those leverage points.

I think even within the hydrocarbon industry, many of the players there would say that we've lost some of our social license to go ahead and do those things that we used to do, whether that is in terms of the extraction, production, or transportation of hydrocarbons; those industrial practices have all come up for criticism, debate, and scrutiny in a way that they hadn't before.

As a result, we are now having to look more seriously at things like our environmental performance, both in terms of our greenhouse gas emissions, and our impacts on the landscape, such as the impact of bitumen extraction on water sources.

As well we are having to carefully consider how are we impacting communities, and not only within Alberta; it is very important for us to be looking at the impacts of our energy system on communities, particularly disadvantaged communities that have been negatively impacted by the energy development system we have supported and developed in the past.

How can we create a more stable energy system within Alberta, but also across Canada and the rest of the world?

Answering that question raises a whole bunch of issues around social license, greenhouse gases, climate change, and working collaboratively, not only within Alberta but across Canada and with our international partners.

Recently the mayors in Quebec publicly opposed the construction of the Energy East pipeline across Quebec, which says to me that we in Alberta have to pay more attention to building good relations and developing partnerships across Canada because we need to find new trading partners; we have had too much reliance on the United States and That's gotten us into trouble.

But we need access to tidewater in order to transport our oil and gas to places other than the US. And as a part of that we need to look at how do we create a different energy mix. How do we decarbonize our economy and allow for other forms of energy production and distribution? That all has to be a part of a discussion about Alberta's energy future.

Those are very good points, especially the point about diversification of partnerships to create a robust and sustainable set of energy partnerships.

We cannot have dominance on one trading partner; we've done that for far too long.

Meeting the Minds – Dr. Lorelei Hanson, Part II

March 11, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Lorelei Hanson has authored two environmental studies courses and two geography courses at AU. She currently tutors her courses ENV5 200 and ENV5 435, and coordinates those as well ENV5 361 and GLST 243. She took some time to speak with Scott Jacobsen about her work with AU and general outlook in a two-part interview.

At the World Economic Forum, Prime Minister Trudeau discussed transitioning from Canadian resources to Canadian resourcefulness; in other words, going from things such as hydrocarbons to things such as human capital, (i.e., education, skills, expertise, and so on.)

How do you think Canada will need to diversify, whether it be the economy or the environment?

It is very clear from us losing a social license that we need to pay more attention to our environmental performance. For a long time, environmentalists felt like their voices weren't being heard but I think recent developments show that their role in scrutinizing our energy system has had an impact.

I think It's also a number of different things converging at once. People are recognizing more and more the impacts of climate change and saying, "You know what, climate scientists are telling us we don't have very long and we've got to do something different soon."

Those factors are converging and drawing attention to Alberta. One result of this is Alberta having been given the label of producing "dirty oil," and people saying "no" to Alberta's current system of oil and gas development.

But we've got this valuable resource and there's no way we will have a completely decarbonized economy in the next couple of decades, so the value of that resource will exist for some time. There's just no way we can transition over night from our current dependence on oil and gas to another energy system.

But we still need to critically look at that energy system, be innovative, and envision something different for the future. We've got to move forward. We can't rely on our old way of doing things.

With respect to Justin Trudeau I'd want to see him back up his words with some concrete policies and programs that will make a difference. We haven't seen that yet.

It sounds good, but let's see how he's going to move forward and do something about improving our environmental performance in Canada.

At the same time, we have an economy in Alberta, and within Canada, absolutely dependent upon natural resource extraction, and so you have to somehow find a way to transition that economy so that You're not having people's lives be devastated in the meantime.

You can't have a province like Alberta lose 10,000 jobs every month. That's not sustainable; if we're going to talk about sustainability we have to include in that analysis social sustainability.

Also, there's no one person that has the answer to how to build a more sustainable energy system in Canada, and so the federal government needs to put in place a process to harness and nurture innovation on and good ideas of how to transition Canada's energy system to be more sustainable.

It is only when we work collaboratively that we will come up with some solutions that work in many contexts.

What are the relevant experts? recommendations or timelines for implementation of the recommendations to solve these challenges?

Right, as I said before, when we talk about an energy system, You're necessarily talking about, what we're calling in some academic and professional circles, "wicked issues."

These are issues that are so complex, cross so many different sectors, and are characterized by indeterminacy in time and scale, uncertainty and interdependency, that they necessarily require collaborative discussion.

These are also emergent issues, so the solutions that we develop for the next couple of years are not the solutions we can apply in the next 15 years. This means that we can't approach our energy and climate change problems using traditional approaches.

It won't work to have a small group of experts getting together, framing the issue, and putting forth what they think is the solution. We also can't apply a cost-benefit analysis to wicked problems.

The conditions we need to examine with respect to energy and climate are continually in flux, and we have to learn to become much more adaptive and collaborative in how we resolve these issues, and That's why the Energy Futures Lab is set up how it is, as a social learning lab.

It is also why the EFL Support Team purposefully chose 40 individuals from across Alberta that represent diverse sectors. You not only have my environmental and academic voice, but you

have voices from the oil and gas sector, renewable energy, indigenous communities, government and community groups.

The EFL conveners purposefully put together this diverse group because they know that we have to learn to find ways to find common values and work together to identify solutions that achieve those values. We can no longer work in siloes.

It is not that we don't need expert knowledge, we certainly need expert knowledge, but it has to play a role within a much broader collaboration of reaching out and looking at how are these energy and climate change are impacting people and the non-human world differently across time and space.

It also means asking questions such as what are people willing to trade off in order to move forward and what education do we need?

If people start to really recognize and accept a different way doing things, a lot of innovation will arise. But we have such entrenched bureaucracies, processes, and timelines that it will not be easy. It means going against all of those things that we use as our standard measurement tools.

At the same time, we have never faced a situation like this, where we're in such dire need of doing something different.

So I think the Energy Futures Lab, the people who put that together fundamentally believe that we can dramatically change the way we orient ourselves and go about our business of daily living. we'll see, right? It is an experiment for sure and it will be interesting to see what will happen in the next 18 months.

What is the direction of this research with respect to AU, and its initiatives relevant to it, for 2016?

I'm a professor at AU and a citizen of Alberta, and energy is an issue of fundamental importance to me, Alberta, and the world. The results that come out of the Energy Futures Lab I hope will include innovations that have an impact.

Of course, that is always the research my colleagues at Athabasca University and at any other university are trying to do. We want to make a difference in the world.

That is why we're teachers and researchers. And this is one of the most fundamental issues facing our times, and we desperately need to find new ways to address it.

Thank you for your time, Professor Hanson.

For more information

Alberta Climate Dialogue. <http://www.albertaclimatedialogue.ca/>.

Dr. Lorelei Hanson. Athabasca University, <http://envs.athabascau.ca/faculty/lhanson/>.

B.C.-Alberts Social Economy Research Alliance:<http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca/>.

Energy Futures Lab <http://energyfutureslab.com>

“Environmental research at Athabasca University will help create a new energy future for Alberta” Athabasca University News. <http://news.athabascau.ca/news/environmental-research-at-athabasca-university-will-help-create-a-new-energy-future-for-alberta/>.

Between Two Houses

March 18, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

The oil downturn and the future knowledge economy means our country has two houses so to speak. One housing the resource-based sector of the economy. Another housing the human capital sector of the economy. I consider both houses' contents important.

But, I argue, we need a balanced economic plan for the next 5, 10, and 25 years; a plan that leans toward intellectual capital over resources in the long-term. AU can be the road between those houses through education. However, infrastructure for that road, for education, takes time and planning.

Take, for instance, the international trend toward the knowledge economy, which seems to show that national success in the future will require preparation and adaptation to the oncoming knowledge economy via education now (Tsaparis, 2014).

Education is an investment in the nation's intellectual capital, which is the currency of the knowledge economy. But education takes time. So the next economy's readiness, founded in education, will also take time.

And by time, I mean a decades-long progression of the relative weighting of the economy in favor of human capital over resources, beginning in the present. And AU, as Canada's largest online postsecondary institution, seems like one major place to help the country's transition into this economy of intellectual capital.

The pressure of this is even more intense with the recent economic downturn in Alberta due to oil prices. Furthermore, Alberta's economic downturn is not isolated. For example, the resource or oil-based dip affected Manitoba as well as Newfoundland and Labrador too (Statistics Canada, 2016; Younglai, 2016).

Bear in mind that while It's bad, *It's not the worst time* for Alberta in its recent economic history. For instance, the current drop in Alberta's economy is less than the 2008/09 economic dip, and even a bit higher than the 1990 one (Babad, 2016).

Furthermore, Alberta is not alone, because Ottawa has promised at least \$250 million in monetary assistance (Varcoe, 2016). Why does this matter? It means we don't need to panic, but we still need to prepare for the future economy.

Nationally, the economy is deeply interconnected. Big dips in the economic situation have provincial/territorial effects elsewhere in the economic system. So if all of the eggs are in one basket such as resources, then dips or rises in the economy cascade across sectors embedded in it. In other words, Alberta is in an economic dip based on oil, which reduces the economic success of other parts of Canada.

And to buffer the country from these dips in the future, education is the key to a balanced economy. We need to be transitioning into education because education is the access point to quality knowledge and training for this new economy.

AU, in part, can help Alberta, and Canada, rise into the future economy, the knowledge economy, in the long-term with greater reliance on resources in the short-term. To conclude, our strength is resources rather than human capital now.

Taken together, both houses mentioned at the outset, economies need to transition into cognitive work in the future because the next economy lies in knowledge and, therefore, education. AU resides at this juncture.

That is, AU is the road between resources and cognitive capital. A transit system from here, resource heavy, to there, human capital heavy. What we need now is for governments, at all levels, to recognize this, and to realize that funding AU is not a cost, not a drain on their resources, but rather an investment. A way to provide education to those of us for who traditional education does not work.

But they won't realize until we make them. The road won't be built without us telling our MLAs that it needs to be done. And if we hope to make the trip between houses, from resources to resourcefulness, they need to know, and soon.

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Anita Rau Badami: An Interview

March 25, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Anita Rau Badami was AU's Writer-in-Residence for 2014-2015. She has written several books, received numerous awards, and most recently was featured on CBC's "Canada Reads", a discussion of books that Canadians should read. She was kind enough to allow AU student Scott Jacobsen to interview her for The Voice Magazine.

You were the 2014-15 Writer-in-Residence at AU. In reflection, how was the time at AU?

My time at AU was wonderful, both as an instructor and as a practising writer. I had the pleasure of working with interesting writers, both beginners and more experienced ones.

My relationship was primarily with the written work since this is a distance education programme, and so I could devote a lot of time and thought to each submission. Hopefully this proved useful to the writers concerned. I also finished a draft of my own book in that time.

What major lessons emerged from the interaction with students, faculty, administrators, and the general AU community?

Working with students always allows me to think about writing anew, to learn even as I am providing instruction. Because of the nature of the position, I did not need to interact much with faculty and administration, but the little contact that I did have gave me a sense of a strong, supportive and caring community of people. I am so glad I had the opportunity to be a part of the AU family.

Your father worked with the Indian Railways and your family moved from one place to another frequently as a result of his job. How did this affect you as a child? What did you learn from the experience?

As a result of our gypsy existence I learned to adjust to new places and people as a result. I enjoyed change and the excitement of new discoveries — whether it was people, nature, buildings, or cultures — in each new location.

However, because of these frequent moves, I did not have any long term friendships and either entertained myself by reading or engaging in creative activities that involved using my imagination such as writing stories or making art something my parents encouraged me and my siblings to do.

I suppose the combination of a restless imagination and a willingness to combine that with words and make something new was what came of the wandering life.

With respect to developing in your early childhood years in India with talent perhaps even giftedness in writing, and becoming a professional writer in the present, where did this love of writing come from?

I loved reading and always imagined writing like my favourite authors. So I guess that's where it all started.

Upon completion of your master's degree, you transformed your graduate-level thesis into *Tamarind Mem* (1996), your first book (Badami, 2016). How did this come to fruition? Or what was the inspiration and timeline for your graduate work being turned into an international publication?

I wanted to write a story about the labile, shifting nature of memory in a family, and how a mother and her daughter recall their stories and histories differently. I was also thinking about train tracks which go the same direction, are parallel, and yet, the view on either side can be very, very different.

The book took me about two years to write. It was accepted for publication a month after I submitted it and another six months or so to edit before it was ready to face the world.

You came to Canada in 1991. As noted in the *January Magazine* interview, you said, "I just followed that husband of mine. He moved to Canada to do a course in environmental science" (Richards, 2000). And that was in Vancouver where you lived with your husband and 13-year old son. So how did the love story begin and develop into the present?

We were introduced to each other by my great aunt who also happened to be my husband's grade school English teacher, and were married a year later. The love story, as you call it, continues today, 32 years later, our son is 29, and we live in Montreal now.

What perspective does a child give on life for you?

If you mean, does being a mother give me a new perspective on life, then I'd say certainly. But this is true for practically every change that one undergoes from childhood, through youth, adulthood, and old age.

It would take several books to outline all these perspectives, so I think it would suffice to say that I have drawn on all of my experiences to create my fictions.

What differentiates the style of writing in the Indian context compared to the Canadian context?

I think an author's style is an individual thing rather than something associated with the place in which one lives or has lived.

Your own writing process, seems complex. I've read you start with notebooks and a pen, with about 100 rewrites of the first page of the book. Then you take the best page from those rewrites to the computer, where you complete the work with the notebook as a backup for if you get stuck (Richards, 2000).

This seems like a common trend in the written word that after sufficient practice and work with writing for oneself, an individuation of style and process occurs for the individual writer.

Of course, Margaret Atwood noted, in a BigThink video on the creative process, that "if you're not finding this happening somewhat spontaneously, you probably shouldn't be doing this activity" (BigThink, 2011). How does the writing process seem to emerge to you?

Spontaneously, I'd say, echoing Margaret Atwood, otherwise I would not still be writing! The ideas are always there, the rewriting is what I do in order to refine the language, story, characters, plot.

The current Writer-in-Residence at AU, Esi Edugyan, of *Half-Blood Blues* acclaim, has said, "I have my own office. A space of one's own is crucial. I write longhand and on a laptop, depending on the day. But then sometimes I'll write in cafes, too. I've learned to trust anything that works, and not to push a single place or method" (Well, 2016).

And you told Professor Tracy Lindberg of AU that your favorite place to write was "On my couch. On my couch." (CBC Books, 2016a). In terms of assistance to writing, what does the couch provide for you other than comfort? In other words, why that space?

Yes, a room of one's own or a private space where one can disappear for the writing of a book is ideal, but it isn't always what I need so long as I am at home. My concentration is absolute, so I can work regardless of what is going on around me.

I cannot work in public places or hotels and cafes. I have had an office for years now, but most of my home functions as my office as there is nobody at home most of the day. The couch in my living room is a favourite spot when I am working on early drafts of a novel or reading other people's books.

When I am in the final stages of the writing process, I move to my office and hole up there and woe betide anyone who disturbs me.

How do these distinct experiences, in India and Canada, in life, merge in your personal writing if at all?

As I said in response to an earlier question, all my life experiences feed my writing in one way or another.

You've won many awards, your book *The Hero's Walk*, for instance, won the Regional Commonwealth Writers Prize, Premio berto, Washington Post Best Book (2001), International IMPAC Dublin Literary Prize longlisting, Orange Prize for Fiction, and received a Kiriama Prize shortlisting (Badami, 2016).

And personally you won the Marian Engle Award for a mid-career woman writer (Badami, 2016). What do these awards mean to you?

I am glad my book received some recognition, but I am also aware that I was lucky. A different jury might have chosen differently. On the one hand a prize is a validation or celebration of one's work by one's peers which is wonderful and gratifying.

Prizes also create an excitement around books and writing and get readers and people who might not otherwise have read a certain book to give it a shot. On the other hand, only one book can win a prize, and as a result becomes far more noticed than dozens of other books which are as good if not better.

What responsibilities to the public come with this extensive recognition of excellence?

I suppose the challenge is to maintain a high degree of artistry and craftsmanship, to write the best book I can.

You recently earned placement on the Canada Reads 2016 shortlist for *The Hero's Walk* (AU News, 2016) along with *Birdie* by Tracey Lindberg, *Bone and Bread* by Saleema Nawaz, *Minister Without Portfolio* by Michael Winter, and *The Illegal* by Lawrence Hill. What does this earned shortlisting feel like or mean to you, especially with these prominent authors earning positions alongside you?

I am delighted and feel very fortunate to have my book on the shortlist with four other very good books.

Now, you described the nature of *The Hero's Walk*, as "About heroism at many different levels. I find it touchingly heroic to just see people living from the day they're born until the day they die, so full of hope. You just wake up every morning and expect the next day to go well. And I find that touching. I wanted to work with that idea: that notion of heroism. And I think that's basically what the book is about" (Richards, 2000).

Since the foundation for the novel, lies in the idea of heroism, why heroism in the context of daily living from birth to death?

So many words have been devoted to grand acts of heroism in epic poems, folk lore and mythology. I wanted to tell the story of an ordinary person who, like so many of us, becomes the hero of his own quiet story of loss and tragedy.

What advice made the most impact for you as a young writer?

Write, stand back, look at your writing objectively, rewrite until it is as perfect as you can make it.

Any advice for novice writers?

Try to write every day. Keep a notepad and pen or something to take down your thoughts with you at all times so you don't forget that brilliant idea. Read all the other wonderful books out there and learn from them.

Any closing thoughts?

Writing is not always easy, it can be enormously frustrating sometimes. But there are those moments of pure magic when everything falls into place and life becomes rosy again. That's why I keep writing — to find that magic again and again.

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A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad and AUSU Councillor. He researches in the Learning Analytics Research Group, Lifespan Cognition Psychology Lab, and IMAGE Psychology Lab, and with the UCI Ethics Center, and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

The New Federal Budget

April 1, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

The federal Liberal government of Canada has pledged billions of dollars for infrastructure in its new budget. According to *The Globe and Mail*, the pledge is “\$125 billion over 10 years” (*The Globe and Mail*, 2016).

That’s a lot of money. And It’s for national, provincial, and territorial infrastructure, with increased funding for research and innovation, among other areas. So it matters to colleges and universities, which means AU, too, whether directly or indirectly. So what’s in the budget?

A number of reports note how the 2016 federal budget affects affordable housing, Canadian arts, citizens’ eligibility for old age security, Canadian families, First Nations, the innovation sector, ocean and freshwater management, real estate, postsecondary students, and other areas.

Lots of things, in other words. Budget 2016 has a wide range of pledges, with changes to be implemented across the national socio-economic landscape. But this doesn’t come without costs. Because nothing is free, expenses and pledged investments lead to costs at the same time. Some things loom, even become worse, like the deficit.

The budget is expected to increase the deficit to \$29.4 billion for 2016-17, which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau defends, naturally (Mintz, 2016; Nease, 2016; Grenier, 2016). Based on a survey, Canadians more or less accept the budget and deficit too (Grenier, 2016; Anderson & Coletto, 2016). So even though there’s an increase in the deficit through the dramatic suite of pledges amounting to \$125 billion, Canadians are generally okay with it.

This is backed by a report in *The Economist*. *The Economist* indicated that the Canadian “economy” was “weakened by low commodity prices” but PM Trudeau’s government continued forward with the promises made during the campaign regardless (*The Economist*, 2016). It continued that the Liberal government of Canada had reversed the fiscal policy of the ex-Conservative government of Canada.

It is important to note that the federal government will give tax cuts to the middle class and tax hikes for the higher-earners to attempt to balance them *ibid.*). The Economist article leaves on a vital note and query by stating, “Most economists support deficit spending at a time when borrowing rates are low and the economy is weak. The question is: will Mr Trudeau know when to stop?” (*ibid.*).

At the provincial level, we find similar reports from the Globe and Mail about the balance between deficit and spending being wise or foolish. “There are questions though as to how much more money provinces and municipalities can contribute to infrastructure, given that many cities and provinces are already managing high debt loads” The Globe and Mail said (*The Globe and Mail*, 2016).

So that means infrastructure spending is an issue, deficit spending is a good thing with a weak economy and low borrowing rates, but there are other, more general, considerations.

Those like when deficit spending for investments in infrastructure is reasonable and when it is not. Some reports say it is a good time, and in the future it might not be. Or maybe it will, we don't know with certainty. The future is murky.

The federal budget from the Liberal government has stated they have a major focus on strengthening the middle class. A Canadian middle class that many college and university graduates will be filling in the future, which is an acute concern for AU undergraduate and graduate students.

According to government sources, strengthening the middle class includes six main parts: a middle class tax cut, the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), helping young Canadians succeed, Employment Insurance (EI), skills training, and job creation, and middle class prosperity (The Government of Canada, 2016b). An important component is the pledged investment in the postsecondary sector too (Samson, 2016).

It talks about the rising costs of tuition for postsecondary education, the concomitant difficulties for young Canadians to attend postsecondary institutions as a result, and the necessity for the prosperity of the country for young Canadians to be able to become certified through postsecondary education (The Government of Canada, 2016c).

This is especially important at AU, where 31% of students have dependents, according to 2010/11 AU statistics (Athabasca University, 2016). One of the most relevant aspects, I think, of this new budget is the section, in Chapter I, to do with the success of young Canadians (The Government of Canada, 2016c).

Or by implication, we the students. And the budget has a number of measures designed to help students who are having trouble affording post-secondary education (Gray, 2016).

So the new budget covers a broad range of areas of the socio-economic vista, increases the deficit, but it may be that the deficit spending is a net good for now. The PM and public (on net) approve of the budget and deficit, but there will need to be examination in the future about the extent of the federal government's deficit spending.

The infrastructure spending affects us at AU, directly or indirectly, will affect us throughout 2016/17, and will need re-evaluation in the future in terms of its viability as time progresses. Echoing *The Economist*, are the pledges net good or net bad? My answer: now, they're good; later, time will tell.

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Meeting the Minds – Dr. Maiga Chang

April 8, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Maiga Chang is an associate professor in AU's School of Information and Computing Sciences and is the New Initiative Chair on executive board of the IEEE Technical Committee of Learning Technology. He recently took some time to be interviewed for The Voice Magazine, and this is the first part of that three-part interview.

Your research interests lie in “mobile learning and ubiquitous learning, museum e-learning, game-based learning, educational robots, learning behaviour analysis, data mining, intelligent agent technology, computational intelligence in e-learning, and mobile healthcare” (Athabasca University, 2016). What seems like the source of these research interests for you?

Basically, I will say that this is a dream. I had a dream that I can create a world, a virtual world, which we live inside. In this world, we can do everything we want, and we can learn everything by interacting with people in the environment. Even though we don't know if the people we interact with are a real person or a person controlled by computers.

In order to do that, first of all, you need to create an of environment, virtual, augmented reality, and game world that people can live inside, access resources and interact with people via their computers, mobile devices, and helmets like Google Goggles, Microsoft Hololens, and Oculus Rift.

Most important is the computer controlled people that we are going to interact with in the virtual world. Computers need to know what we need. They need to know what our skill-set is. In that case, they can give us appropriate quests or activities so we can do something not too easy and not too difficult, but that we can manage it.

Then, they can do more. So, basically, you can see these kinds of intelligent agents/computer players, or virtual characters need to know you. They need to have a data mining engine or data analytic mechanism behind the scenes to find your preference, needs, and learning style, and then when they talk to you, and they interact with you, they need to use natural language.

They need to speak to you. They also need understand when you are talking. That is part of natural language processing research taking place. Of course, artificial intelligence is very important.

All of my research topics. They all do some efforts and they contribute to my dream of creating a virtual world in which everybody can learn anything they want based on their learning preference, their experience, and what they have done already.

How will digital technology, electronic media, and artificial intelligence shift the landscape around education, and its subsequent impact on individual students and instructors?

I will first say what the traditional learning or the classroom learning looks like. Basically, the teacher is needed to prepare a lecture and a lot of materials for teaching. Then, when they go to the classroom, they see a lot of students. 40 or even hundreds in a university level class.

They use the same thing to teach all 100 different students with the same technique, with the same content, with the same test. Under such circumstance, some of their students may not understand what they're taught, some of their students may not like this teaching way. That is where with the digital technology, or what you said, with "electronic media" and "artificial intelligence" can contribute.

In that case, we can provide teachers something like with "Okay, now you prepare your materials that look like this, and, according to our learning analytics result or data mining result, we can tell you that your teaching materials and methods are very good for 65% of your students.

But there are another 35% of students that they need something more fancy. Probably, you should be looking for another YouTube video for specific content, and then your teaching materials will be more suitable for them."

But, as I say, we can only cover a portion of the people. At least, when we have these kinds of technologies, we can digitalize our materials; we can have multimedia; and we can have interactive activities for students to get their hands dirty.

Electronic media, for example, some students, for instance, don't like reading. They like watching video. So, these kinds of things, when put together, can make students learn better or more efficiently. That, I think, could help teachers.

Of course, I need to emphasize that I never consider to use technology enhanced research results to replace teachers because I think teachers are very important, which is why I think your question is very good because we are trying to help teachers and make them teach more efficiently. I mean, the lectures, more suitable, or better for the students.

You are the Associate Professor in the School of Computing Information and Systems at AU. What are the tasks and responsibilities involved in this station?

Basically, every professor in university or in any university in the world is probably having the same responsibilities. They are teaching, doing research, and also having some kinds of services. So, basically, teaching is easy to understand.

You need to prepare and revise your courses, design and open new courses. When you teach students, you need to answer student questions and mark assignments. Of course, it is a little bit different in Athabasca University than in other universities because in AU, at least in the School of Computing and Information Systems. We professors have two different roles.

The first role is you can be a tutor for students in a course, which is coordinated by your colleague. For example, I was a tutor for COMP-308, in that course, I am a tutor. I need to interact with students.

I will respond their questions, and when they submit their assignment I will mark it. However, whenever they have their final exam, I do not mark that. The final exam is marked by the course coordinator, which is my colleague another professor.

I am the course creator in some other courses. If the tutors have a question, such as, “How should I mark this assignment or how should I respond this question?” I will make sure all students have consistent responses and marking schemes from their tutors.

Also, if some students they say, “Oh, your course has a problem. I cannot access a specific webpage” or “I cannot see this reading material,” then they may ask their tutors for help and tutors will reflect that to me so I can fix the issues.

Doing research, for example, we will propose and apply for government and industry funding. We will also supervise our graduate students doing their research like essay, project, or thesis research. Of course, publishing and writing papers are also our job for doing research.

The service could help university. For example, like me, try to help university design University Certificate in Game Development and Programming and the Bachelor of Science with a Minor in Game Development. That means when you enrol as a program student in a Bachelor of Science, then you can choose to take another minor in game development.

Also, if you want to switch to a job in game industry, you may want to work on the university certificate in game development and programming so you can provide the potential employers a proof of what you are capable of.

So, that’s what I helped schools to do, and also we needed to participate in some committees to help the school to make a decision. For example, in a task, I was in a committee for seeking and discussing what information technology we need to use.

We need to decide which web-based conference applications we want to use. That’s something that we need to do for our university.

Could there be some applications there for some artificial intelligence algorithm that understands at least rudimentary grammar and natural language to some degree, or academic language, to make recommendations to students?

That’s good! That’s one of my research directions. First of all, we develop a system called

Automarking. Automarking is actually online now and provides web service for anybody. So if you want to mark your students' short answers of open-ended questions, then you can provide Automarking the correct answer you've thought of and also what your students write, and then we can mark it for you. Of course, you can consider to override the marks by yourself. So, that's the first thing we have done.

Right now, we are trying to do two things. We want to mark an essay. When we mark an essay, which means there are more sentences and some of these sentences will be associated with others that have been written at very beginning. And that will be very difficult for computer to understand and mark but that is what we want to do.

The researchers a long time ago, about 1960s, they believe that some structures can make computers they learn from sentences and answer questions according to their own knowledge structure. In that case, when the computer read more documents and information, the structure can become more complete and solid.

So, when you say IBM Watson, when it assesses something, it will try to access the knowledge processed, learned and stored to get some responses. And so yes! It is doable. One relevant research direction that I am doing is trying to mark students' writing skill. Which means not how correct your answer is, but how you write words and tell the story.

For examples, you use a lot of wrong words, or you have a lot of typos, or you use inappropriate verbs, and you don't write things in a sequence or something like that. We want to mark students' writing skills before marking the correctness and coverage that their answers are, but this research hasn't been done yet.

What are the joys of teaching at AU for you?

I would say most students are really active. I mean compared to students in the traditional university. I taught in traditional university since 1998. Since 2007, I've worked for AU.

Compared to traditional universities, students in AU are active because most of them have their own goal. They know what they want. They know, "Okay, I want to take this course because this course can help me." It's not like most traditional university students. They are forced to take courses to graduate. AU students are active. They are mature.

So, basically, because they have a goal to pursue. So, sometimes it is good to see when you ask students to do a little more they will say, "Yes." Because they know if they do this, they can get more benefit. It makes sense. You can make them know why you are asking this; what benefits they will have. And I think that is a good thing of teaching at AU regarding the student body.

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A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad and AUSU Councillor-elect. He researches with various groups and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Canadian Education News

April 22, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

International students in Moncton encouraged to stay

Moncton, New Brunswick wants international students to stay following graduation. The City of Moncton hosted a job fair to introduce international students to local employers.

They offered 200 job opportunities for post-graduate employment, co-op work placements and summer employment, as well as opportunities in banking, education and insurance.

One attendee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the University of Moncton, Christian Kalnde, said, “You have an affection to the country.” he said. “Some international students want to stay here, but It’s just jobs, you can justify when you want to stay here.”

Simon Fraser University reports better career prospects with co-op placements

The report by the British Columbia university Simon Fraser University “found that co-op work placements provide many benefits to university students, even after graduation.” It studied graduates between 2000 and 2013.

Based on the research, those that finished their co-op had higher *median* wages compared to the others. Furthermore, graduates with co-ops are more likely to have jobs relevant to their education.

President of SFU, Andrew Petter, said that the co-op placements assists students find suitable jobs, even soon enough to alter their educational path.

Work to ease international students’ paths to permanent residence being done

John McCallum, Canadian Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship wants to ease the pathway to permanent residency for international students. This status would be for after graduation from a Canadian post-secondary institution.

McCallum said, “They know something about the country, so they should be first on our list of people who we court to come to Canada.” He will be working with colleagues, in the provinces and territories, to better international students’ Express Entry system.

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Meeting the Minds – Dr. Maiga Chang, Part II

April 22, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Maiga Chang is an associate professor in AU's School of Information and Computing Sciences and is the New Initiative Chair on executive board of the IEEE Technical Committee of Learning Technology.

His research interests include mobile learning and ubiquitous learning, museum e-learning, game-based learning, educational robots, learning behaviour analysis, data mining, intelligent agent technology, computational intelligence in e-learning, and mobile healthcare. He recently took some time to be interviewed for The Voice Magazine, and this is the second part of that three-part interview.

How do your research interests integrate into development of courses?

I have one research direction, which is to make computers, not smarter, but to be capable of having emotions and recognizing users' emotions. Researchers in the United States have done some research that is pertinent. They have tried to develop a computer an assistant.

It is quite good. You can ask any question about the course, and the computer can answer you. They also developed another computer, a virtual person. He or she does not know anything. But anytime you have a question, he or she will show his or her emotion.

You say, "This part is so difficult. How will I learn?" He or she will say, "Oh, you can definitely find an answer on your own. Why not take a look at your textbook once again?" You say, "I think I figured this out." He or she says, "Oh my god, I am so glad to see that." So, it is quite intelligent, but it actually doesn't know anything.

The researchers want the students to feel that they are interacting with a teaching assistant and never tell them that in fact it is a computer they are interacting with. At the end, the researchers ask the students, "Tell us the name of the smartest teaching assistant you think."

The students say the one that has emotion. This is important. This is why we have this research. We have to make sure the computer has emotion. Also, they need to identify your emotion.

From your typing, from your voice, from your facial expression, this research I created a course. It is Affective Computing. If you take that course, at the end of the course, you should be able to develop computer guy with emotion detection, function, or has its own emotion.

Also, as you know, my research topic includes mobile application, personal service, location-based service. So, I created a course called Mobile Computing, and another called Mobile Game Development. Based on my research, I've created these courses.

So, students get some ideas, or get engaged, saying, "Oh! Now, I have a computer, which has emotion. Can I do more?" They will head off into another level of research to start working on.

What are the benefits of teaching at AU compared to traditional universities?

There are differences. They are different from traditional university and AU because we are almost purely online as a university. We teach students with a lot of help from technology. So, in that case, I would say that teaching at AU that we are the *pioneers* of teaching students with technology, artificial intelligence applications, learning analytics, everything.

I would say that this teaching and learning should be the future. As you know, some people start to work on full time jobs after K-12 and some of them go to university for another four years, which means they only learn in traditional classroom or in traditional setting for 12 to 16, maybe 18 years.

How long will you live? How long will you need to learn? You will need to learn for your whole life. When you graduate from high school and university, you cannot go back to university unless you want to quit a job when you want to learn once again. You will need another way of doing life-long learning.

AU gives us the opportunity to create a smart learning environment. So if we can use our research results to make a smarter learning environment, then we can provide students with more personalized learning experiences, which can make them learn more efficient, and learn the things that they really need and want to see on their own way and own pace. That is another good thing for students, I would say, teaching at AU.

What do you think are the strengths of learning at AU?

This is the future. Like the students right now in high school and in primary school, you can ask them. They are trying to use mobile devices to learn. Also, as you know, they will post something on their Facebook or their blog. That is the future. As a parent, around 50% of students at AU have family, even children.

When they learn at AU, they are adapting to the future of learning, and, in that case, when their child or children have a question. In my upbringing, I could not ask questions of my parents about using Facebook, but right now, you can, because people use Facebook. Now when you're taking an AU course, you are sometimes asked to make a video, put it on YouTube, and then you can teach your children, your child.

One more thing is very important. It is self-regulated learning skill. It is very important for everyone because it helps you efficiently learn, or digest, or plan your goal. When you learn with AU, you will learn that skills. You can teach your child and children, and other family members.

You worked in the Machine Intelligence Research Labs (Machine Intelligence Research Labs, 2013). What did this position involve in terms of tasks and research topics?

The lab, actually, is a Special Interest Group (SIG) organization. It is free for any researchers that have shared research interests to join. In this lab, researchers can share their research results.

They can share the research and relevant opportunities they heard, and they can work with others if they have a project and they are looking for collaborators.

What is the general process of research that is important for undergraduate students to know?

The process starts with an idea. You will have an idea through seeing something, from newspaper, television or even a movie. Have you seen the television series called *Person of Interest*? It involves a lot of artificial intelligence, voice recognition, text mining, and data analytics themes.

Then, you survey some relevant literature, which makes you more comfortable with your idea, because if you can see research that was done by others, research identical to your idea, then you do not need to do it. When you read the literature, you will have more confidence in being able to do it. Then, you need to find a specific goal for your idea. So, what do you want to do with your research?

When I supervise students, I ask them to think big, but, at the end, when they start doing research they start focusing on the specific idea of that research. When you have a goal, you need to break it down into specific objectives.

For instance, if I have a goal, say, I want to have world peace. But to achieve that, I need to break it into three or four objectives such that when I finish each objective, I will be closer to my goal. When all of the objectives have been finished, or achieved at the end, then I should have reached my goal.

For any objective, we probably have some issues, or some “problems” needing to be solved. So, for example, I want to create a virtual person that can learn from reading a book. In order to do that, I need to solve some issues. For instance, how does the computer store the text or the image when it read a book?

If I can solve all of the issues, then the objective can be accomplished. Of course, once you identify the issues, you need to do more in-depth literature review or surveys. Because sometimes you will see people have solved this particular research issue, but not very well or with limitations, and you can improve this.

Or perhaps, you can mix three or four methodologies for better solutions to your issues. You need to do more in-depth or comprehensive surveys after you have identified the issues and possible solutions.

The most important part is, once you finish all of the objective, you need your goal to be evaluated. You cannot simply say, “Okay, I am done! I think this is good!” However, when you do the pilot, when you ask people to really use the system, you will probably find a lot of problems.

People will say, “No, this is not user-friendly. It is not understanding me correctly.” In that case, you need to evaluate your research outcome such like a system, a tool, or a framework and workflow.

When you analyze your system or research results, you need to use appropriate measure. For instance, we have quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. You need to evaluate your system in different ways.

For example, if you are doing a searching program, like Google search engine, then you can try to evaluate your system by using the performance. How much time it needs to find something? How accurate is the search result or results? Also, you can do that from a qualitative way. That is basically the process of research. A very difficult one. [Laughing]

For undergraduate students hoping to become engaged in research at AU and beyond, what resources are available through AU for undergraduate students?

AU Library. They provide free access to most of the academic papers and data. If you want to do the research, and you want to engage in the research, you can access all of the academic research work in the world without any problems.

Also, in my case, some will come to me and say he or she wants to do research. And I coincidentally have some research projects I’m thinking about. So, I hire them to be the research assistant. And they can do or take part in the research project. A couple even published papers, undergraduates published papers, on whatever they did in the conference. I think these resources are what they are looking for.

We have a role called an advisor in the School of Information and Computing Sciences. You can approach an advisor and tell them you want to do some research, and ask what courses you should take or which professors you should contact.

When you get the contact, you can talk to the professor. For example, some students ask me. I tell them, “Okay, you should take these three courses. In the final project course, you can do a research project based on what you learn in these three or four courses.” Those are the resources available for undergraduate students.

What about graduate students?

Graduate students can access more. We have a graduate student research fund, which can support graduate students during their research, and they can disseminate in their research in conferences.

Also, if you are living in Alberta, you can apply for Profiling Alberta's Graduate Students fund for attending a conference. If you are not living in Alberta, on the other hand, you can apply for Graduate Level Student Travel Awards. They are similar.

One more thing, good thing, for MScIS students is that they can apply for Alberta Innovates Technology Futures (AI-TF) Graduate Student Scholarships, which is \$5,000 per year for two years during their thesis research.

Our family of graduate studies. They always hold a lot of online seminars that teach you how to write a paper, how to prepare your research agenda, how to make your research presentation, and so on. So, this additional resource, which can be accessed by graduate students.

How can undergraduate students improve their research and the resources available for their research?

Talking to a professor or advisor is an important part of this, so you can identify the resources needed to access before you start working on the research idea or topic you are interested in. For example, if you tell me, "I want to do this research."

Then I will let you know what courses you might want to take, and then look at these two books, and then, of course, I will talk to you to try and elaborate the research a little bit more because a lot of undergraduate students, their research ideas are more practical, which means they look at something and want to do that.

And yes, that can be done, but that is not, really, research but duplicating research. So, in that case, we need to try to figure out what part of your idea can be more research-oriented. That is what they can do: talk to and listen to the advice of the professor and advisor. That is most important.

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Canadian Education News

April 29, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Alberta education kept afloat via borrowing

Alberta education will remain intact in spite of low oil prices through a deficit. School councils and parents expressed concern about the funding for students because of the downturn in the Alberta economy, but the budget will increase from by 4.3% from the previous year to \$7.9 billion.

The budget will provide k-12 and advanced education funding and there are “no major school builds or renovations” included in the budget. Education Minister, David Eggen, said, “We know that we might have to make sacrifices in other areas, and borrow some money, but a child’s education at each stage of their development should not be compromised. That’s the way we roll here in Alberta.”

According to Advanced Education Minister Marlin Schmidt, students do not need to be worried that the tuition freeze for the second year will cause problems for them in future years.

Edmonton launches the Mindshare series

The University of Alberta launched Mindshare, which is a series that brings together top researchers, politicians, bureaucrats and industry leaders from Canada and abroad.

These minds were brought together in Edmonton on April 18th to discuss the future of energy systems. Canada Research Chair in Cultural Studies at University of Alberta, Imre Szeman, said, “The next steps in addressing environmental crisis will have to be led by the social sciences and humanities.”

Other aspects of the discussion were China and its large coal consumption, and that consumption’s changes to the environment such as air pollution. For those with an interest, there’s further information about Mindshare events throughout Canada, [here](#).

New competition for national and international researchers for postdoctoral fellowships

Canadian and international researchers can take part in a competition for 2016-2017 postdoctoral fellowships. They are called the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships for those that “have recently completed a Ph.D., Ph.D.-equivalent, or health professional degree.”

The fellowships come with \$70,000 per year for two years. Their intent is to bring in the world’s best researchers at the postdoctoral level. These will be held in collaboration with a host institution.

The deadline for the recent Ph.D. graduates is September 21, 2016. For more information, candidates and others can look into the [Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship website](#).

Minds We Meet – Interviewing Students Like You!

April 29, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Louise Baptiste is an AU student. Recently, she completed the last course to be finalized for the Bachelor of Nursing degree and was accepted in a master's degree program.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen recently interviewed Louise by e-mail, and here's what she had to say about near-graduation, master's degree program acceptance, and being an Indigenous student with five kids at AU.

How did you get involved in the AU community?

I originally was a licensed practical nurse, and decided that I would like to go back to school to obtain further education. I was drawn towards AU because it allowed me the opportunity to work fulltime, while being able to attend my children's activities, and complete my degree.

What about the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) degree program?

I chose the BN program because I love my career field of nursing. I have worked as a nurse for 13 years, 7 of those have been as a nurse educator to practical nursing students. This program allowed me to complete my degree in my chosen profession while still working in that same profession full-time. In my current workplace advanced education is encouraged and required, so I felt that this was the best route to do so.

What made you interested in nursing?

I originally chose to become a nurse after I had my first daughter and saw how the nurses loved their job in the NICU. I felt that working in this career would allow me to help others, especially those from more vulnerable populations, such as where I come from. I wanted to help others, teach others, and be a role model to others from a similar background.

What work have you done in relation to the BN program, your course and extracurricular work?

In the BN program there are three course clusters: Cluster A is non-nursing courses, Cluster B consists of mainly nursing courses and 3 clinical practicums that have online and in-person components; and, Cluster C contained an extensive final practicum. I just completed Cluster C recently.

As an Indigenous student – First Nations, Inuit, or Métis, what is your specific heritage?

I am a First Nations status student, my father is Caucasian and my mother is Cree, originally from Samson First Nation in Maskwacis. My mother initially lost her status when she married my father, but my mother, sister, and I gained our status back at a later date.

Do you think your heritage influences your personal perspectives?

My heritage has had a huge impact on me. I did not grow up on my own reserve, but spent most of my adolescence and young adult life living on or near a couple of reserves close to Rocky Mountain House, called Sunchild and O'Chiese.

My parents divorced when I was young, and I was raised by my father, who was close to the Aboriginal culture despite being non-Aboriginal. I was raised outside the norm, without power or running water, and was very poor most of my formative life.

I have recently grown to know family members from my mother's side, and it has been an eye opener for me. I can see how the residential school system almost destroyed many members of my family who are suffering from addiction issues.

My grandmother (*nokhom*) was taken from her family and raised in residential schools, and the trauma of this affected her ability to be a mother to her own children. My mother was also raised in residential schools, and had similar difficulties.

I feel that our family would have been closer to each other, and our traditional culture, had this not cascaded down and had such an intergenerational impact. I left home at a young age due to the circumstances in my household, and ended up dropping out of school and being homeless.

I would have had a deeper connection to my community if my mother had raised me, but, as I grow older, I feel myself being pulled closer to my roots. I feel that it is my responsibility to help improve and lead the way for my people, since I have been given opportunities that others may have not.

What support have you received from the community this heritage connects you with?

I have been actually received support and encouragement through some family members and role models. One particular role model is Dr. Lisa Bourque-Bearskin, who has a Ph.D. in nursing. She is the president of the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada (ANAC). I aspire to be like her, and am honored to be the recipient of her support.

Is it a different experience being an Indigenous student?

I do not know any other Indigenous students in the BN program or at AU, but I do know of 2 students who are applying to the program who are Aboriginal. Although there was a lot of group work in the program, other than clinical practicums, I did not have face to face interaction with other students; so I feel that it is probably less of a variable at an online institution.

However, I did find that I was able to focus on my culture throughout some of the assignments, as health care and access to health care is a huge issue for many First Nations people.

Have you noted any common experiences between yourself and other indigenous students that you think other students may not have to deal with?

I have found that many Indigenous students seem to struggle with education in general, especially those who live on reservations. I know that a lot of this has been due to lack of funding or less funding provided to reservation schools.

The effect of such has had an impact on Indigenous students in being able to attend post secondary institutions in general. Even at the institution I work at there are not as many Indigenous students as I thought there would be.

I feel that people often have misperceptions of post secondary funding provided to Aboriginal students. Unfortunately, there are limited funds for large groups of people, and many people are turned down each year.

What is your favorite thing to do during time off?

My favourite thing to do is to spend time with my family during time off. A lot of time is spent at hockey, and their other extracurricular activities. I also enjoy date nights with my husband, because they are very rare.

You have five kids, which can be hectic. How do you manage the demands of a mother in the midst of classes at university?

I have found that being a mother while working fulltime and going to school is very hectic, but one gets good at multi-tasking. I have often had to bring books and my computer to my kid's activities, games and practices.

They are usually required to be an hour early, so I have spent that time studying, writing essays, etc. while waiting for their games/practices. Three of my children are 12, 14, and 16, so they sometimes help with the younger ones.

I had my younger children while attending AU, and it has been a struggle. I found it especially hard with my youngest because he wanted my attention continuously, I often found myself typing with one hand while nursing him or holding him with my other hand.

I also provided care to my niece before her mother passed away in the last couple of years, and often still provide care for her on the weekends. It has been challenging because her mother was, unfortunately, one of the missing and murdered aboriginal women in Alberta. I have been very lucky to have the emotional support and help of my husband, and my sister while attending AU.

What is the experience of being a mother-student, or working-mother student?

I feel that my children see how hard I have worked to gain an education, and I know that it has instilled the importance of education into them. I know that they appreciate how hard it is to work, be a student, and a mother at the same time. It is challenging because my house is not always perfect, and they are expected to help out, but I know that they are proud of what I have accomplished.

Was there a particular reason for AU over other universities?

Yes, AU allowed me to attend school while being able to work and provide for my children. As well, I live in a rural area, although I work in Calgary, and found AU convenient because I was able to spend quality time with my children.

What is your favorite hobby?

I love singing. In my free time, I sing a lot, especially country genre.

Who is your favorite artist?

I love the artistry of the late Dr. Dale Auger. He was a Cree Aboriginal artist from Alberta. His artwork is so vivid, and he was known for sharing the ways of the Cree people. He was also a role model for me, as I eventually plan on obtaining a Doctorate of Education Degree as well.

Who is your favorite poet?

I am not into poetry too much, but I find that music is a form of poetry. I love Dani and Lizzy's song *Dancing in the Sky*.

Any recommended authors or books?

To be honest, I have not had a lot of time to read books recently, but I have a couple of books on my to-read-list written by Eden Robinson, which include *Monkey Beach* and *Traplines*.

So you've completed the work for the Bachelor of Nursing degree, but are still waiting for the mark for the last course to be finalized. What does it feel like to be so close to done?

It is a wonderful feeling, like a weight has been lifted off of my shoulders. I have been working towards this, initially since 2007, and then re-enrolled in 2011 due to life's circumstances. Being a high school dropout, I never thought I would be able to do this, I will be the first person in my family to obtain a university degree. I am very proud of this accomplishment.

You've also been accepted to a master's program, congratulations! Which program and why did you pick it?

I will be starting my Masters of Education in July 2016. I chose to apply for this program

because I have worked as a nurse educator since 2009, and I feel that having this degree will help me to focus on leadership, and influences on Aboriginal as well as nursing education.

What was your single most important experience while at AU?

My final practicum was my most important experience. I felt that I was able to put everything together, and finally feel as though I saw the end in sight.

What is your greatest regret?

My greatest regret is that I did not finish my degree sooner. I found that at times I was not as motivated as I should have been.

Any thoughts on e-texts?

I am old fashioned, and prefer opening up a textbook, and making notes. However, the nice thing about e-texts is that you do not need to drag textbooks with you to study.

Any recommendations for first- and second-year nurses?

Make sure to set up a study schedule, and I would recommend taking the program with a friend, so that you can help to motivate each other.

What do you think is the most important skill for any undergraduate student?

I feel being organized is very important. It does not matter if one has children or works fulltime, there are always other distractions. I would say that the majority of undergraduate students choose AU because they have other obligations.

I think that organizing a study schedule and sticking to it is important for success, as well as remembering to take breaks and doing what you enjoy, so as not to feel overwhelmed.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

I am very grateful to have been able to attend AU, and I think that distance education is important for those of us who are unable to attend the traditional route. I feel that many Indigenous students living on reservations with internet access would benefit from this type of education, due to having responsibilities to their families and children.

Thank you for your time, Louise.

Interview with the Director – Behind the Scenes at AU Press

May 6, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Fellow undergraduate students might or might not know about the university press for AU called AU Press. It is an important resource for the representation of the academic and scholarly aspects of the university. Recently, Scott Jacobsen interviewed the acting director and marketing and production coordinator, Ms. Megan Hall.

What are the tasks and responsibilities of your position?

The role of acting director is one that I took over in October 2015, but I have been the marketing and production coordinator at the Press since 2012. The tasks and responsibilities of the marketing and production coordinator include the last two phases of the publication process, the design, layout, and printing of a book and the promoting of a book once it is published.

The duties are varied. I write the descriptive copy for each book which appears on our website and elsewhere on the web, I coordinate with cover designers and interior designers to create the right look and feel for our publications, I collaborate with authors to determine the specific audience for the book and how to reach them, and I organize the appearance of both the Press and our authors at book launches and conferences.

In the role of acting director, I work alongside Pamela Holway, senior editor, and Connor Houlihan, associate editor, to shape the Press list of publications. I also spend a good deal of time applying for grants and arranging for publication funding for our titles in addition to advocating for the open access movement in Canada and managing the budget for the Press.

What are the criteria for the inclusion of materials for AU Press?

All AU Press books, journals, and website publications must be peer-reviewed in order to receive our imprint, so that forms the basis of our criteria. When an author or journal enquires about publishing with AU Press we first collect some information about the project and evaluate whether it fits our mandate and our mission.

We have cultivated a strong list of publications in the areas of online education, labour studies, indigenous studies, and the environment, but we also consider manuscripts outside these subject areas when we feel that the work makes an important contribution to scholarship.

How is AU Press funded?

Although the operational funding we receive from provincial and federal granting agencies is key to running a complete publishing program what is far more important and significant is the financial support provided by AU.

Acquiring, shaping, curating, certifying, editing, promoting, and disseminating scholarship requires investment and although we make the culmination of all of these effort, the book, the journal, the website, free, the costs of producing it are in no way reduced by an open-access mandate. Our publishing activities are subsidized by AU and we could not distribute the publications in the way we do without this support.

You also mentioned grants. What is the grant-writing and submission process for AU Press?

We apply for grants from both provincial and federal funding agencies. We receive operating grants from the Alberta Media Fund and the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada Book Fund and we receive specific title-funding from a number of different sources including the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program offered through the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Applying for grants includes describing our publication program, our evaluation process, and our open-access mandate as well as laying out our publication plans for the forthcoming year.

In 2014, for open access week, you wrote, "inasmuch as the need for knowledge is fundamental to human culture, that knowledge should be shared rather than restricted to those who can pay for it" (Holway & Hall, 2014). Nearly two years have passed since you wrote these words, would you say that this still reflects AU Press's mission and mandate?

We are still very much committed to the mission upon which the Press was founded, in fact, I might argue, that an economic downturn is just the time to continue the conversation about how the future might be shaped by the sharing of knowledge.

In a recent AU Press publication, *Alberta Oil and the Decline of Democracy in Canada*, the authors discuss the potential for the erosion of democracy in single-resource economies while the authors of *Scaling Up* describe the potential that the social economy has to create a more sustainable way of life.

These two books cover some of the most pressing challenges of our time and It's important that policy makers, citizens, and educators know what the leading edge discussions are on these issues.

The information and knowledge contained in our publications are valuable to the advancement of scholarship and to the betterment of our society and we believe that by making them freely downloadable from our website we are reducing one of the significant barriers to valuable work of this kind.

Why was AU Press founded as an open access press, and what challenges do you face because of your chosen publication model?

Ms. Hall: The founding of AU Press as an open-access publisher grew out of Athabasca University's mandate: its commitment to excellence, openness, flexibility, and accessibility. In 2007, at the time of our founding, there were very few open-access presses in North America, in fact we were the first scholarly monograph publishing house, but since then the open-access movement has grown and we have three university presses in Canada that are regularly publishing open-access monographs.

Experimenting with an open-access publishing model does bring with it particular challenges which include reduced revenue. Our solution is to watch our budget closely, to use next-to-free marketing techniques and platforms, to seek out funding for each title, and engage in partnerships with other presses and organizations when possible.

Our commitment, first and foremost, is to scholarship and quality and we hope that AU Press helps to promote the open access movement by proving that open and free material can and should uphold all the hallmarks of good scholarship.

AU Press also runs a blog, the Open Book Blog. How does that fit in with what you do?

Yes, we've started a blog. The idea was to create a space where we could feature the work of our authors in an accessible style. There has been a notable decline in the coverage of books in print media so our blog is an opportunity for the general public as well as the AU community to find out more about who we are and what we publish.

What future initiatives are in-progress for AU Press?

We have a new catalogue coming out in a month announcing the titles planned for next season. We can't wait to let people know about the forthcoming books we're excited about! We will also be building on already established partnerships with the University of South Africa Press and the Canadian Committee on Labour History.

In addition, we'll be displaying our books at the Congress for Social Sciences and Humanities being held in Calgary this year along with the University of Alberta Press and the University of Calgary Press. Students, staff, and faculty will also have a chance to see our books on display at Convocation in June in Athabasca, a wonderful chance for us to meet the people of AU in person.

Thank you for your time, Ms. Hall.

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Meeting the Minds – Dr. Maiga Chang, Part III

May 13, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Maiga Chang is an associate professor in AU's School of Information and Computing Sciences and is the New Initiative Chair on executive board of the IEEE Technical Committee of Learning Technology.

His research interests include mobile learning and ubiquitous learning, museum e-learning, game-based learning, educational robots, learning behaviour analysis, data mining, intelligent agent technology, computational intelligence in e-learning, and mobile healthcare.

He recently took some time to be interviewed for The Voice Magazine, and this is the final part of that three-part interview.

What is the most valuable experience of interaction with AU students, especially at the undergraduate level?

AU students have their own goals, jobs, and families. So, I think the most valuable experience will be students thinking ahead. They will participate in course activities more. I ask, in my Mobile Game Development course, for students to do their final presentation as a Skype or Adobe connect meeting.

They have very in-depth presentations. We ask students to do a 15 to 20 minutes? presentation, but, at the end, they cannot stop. They want to talk more. Suddenly, they've found someone is interested in what they did.

They try to get so many things into the presentation. I have a lot of final, online presentations that run more than an hour, even though they are only asked to present for 15 minutes. So, that is very good.

Another experience I've had interacting with students, at least one, which was valuable, but not positive, is that, in my course, the final online course presentation helps me see what they really understand. I say, "Okay, you need to have a webcam. It is required so I can see you, and know you are the one who is talking."

And I found in one instance that every time I asked a question, I heard another person answer first. And then the student would answer; someone was coaching him. Also, we use webcams. Using them, I found there were other people other than the student, sitting beside them.

I wasn't sure what they were doing in the computer lab, but then I found every time the student answered a question and the answer is not quite correct, I would see an arm reach over and push the student, it seems to me trying to tell him that "You are wrong! You are wrong!"

I didn't directly know if it was cheating, though it looked like it, but, because of this, I can't know if they really understand. So, I asked more. Not a positive experience, but that is technology. Interaction with the students helped me to catch that.

Some people think, "Oh, you are doing an online degree, It's easy. You can get any course passed easily." But that is not the case because we ask them to do the online presentations one-on-one, not like in the classroom where in a group presentation you might hide behind the other students and get their score.

No, this one you need to come online and talk to me directly. Everything you have done, and we can hear everything behind the scenes. That is another point. But I will say that learning at AU is not a very easy thing.

What are the expected and unexpected difficulties along the path for research?

The first one is reading and understanding existing research. Most of the time you want to do research, and when you read the paper, you don't understand most of content described in the paper. So, when you start, you will find that this is very frustrating because you do not understand what they are talking about, or the methodology they use.

And you need to learn a lot of things. Usually, I tell people and students that when you start doing research, you will be very frustrated, and find it very difficult. You might not even want to do any more because you have the feeling that even though you do the research, you don't understand, and you need to learn a lot more.

You will probably need a lot of time before you can really have a little bit of understand about what You're going to do. Almost everyone will face this when trying to start their research because most of the students are doing research for the first time in their life and don't have any experience with it.

The second one is that most students, especially undergraduate students and even most graduate students in computing and information systems, think the design and the implementation of systems, tools, features are the only thing they need to do.

But implementation is a technical part of the research, not the academic-oriented one. The designed functions and features are not really research. For research, you need to be very innovative.

When you start doing research, you act like you are in a company. In a company, you want to invent a new phone. You already have an iPhone in the market, a simple duplicated one won't make your company a success.

You need to make sure your phone is different from the iPhone, another existing research result. Your phone has to be better. Perhaps the technology it uses is different, or you can provide a longer-lasting battery, or other things. Hence, simply developing something is not research. Research is trying to make some tasks you have done a little bit different and better than what existing research others have done.

You need to find something that is different! Something that people have never thought of or perhaps have done but did not consider it completely, so you can consider that as your research contributions.

That is another difficulty that people will face when doing their research. Of course, a proper evaluation plan and results are needed to prove you reach the research goal and objectives. So, another aspect is explaining the collected data.

When students finish their research, they shall do a pilot or experiment. They collect a lot of data, but do not know how to explain the results. For example, if they found that most of the male students do not like the system, what does that mean?

That is a result. You can write it on the paper. You can say, “68% of the male students do not like using my system.” But everyone can tell that from your data. For research, you need to explain it further.

You need to discover the reason why 68% of students do not like your system. That is another difficulty when students write their thesis for the first several rounds or drafts. For example, one of my students eventually works out his final thesis that is the 48th version, which means he has done 24 revisions and I have done 24 revisions. We write round-by-round.

What is your style of research?

Unlike many other researchers, I have very broad research interests. That is not very good for a researcher. Ten years ago, a very senior researcher told me, “Oh no, you shouldn’t do so many different research topics. You should focus on one.” I know, I know people will benefit more if you specialize because you will dig more and deeper in your research.

Your research will be more solid and grow like building construction; this year you build the first floor, next year you build the second floor, and when you retire you leave behind a twenty or thirty storey building for people to look out from, but, from my point of view, doing research is doing something you really like and you will have fun from the process of doing research.

For example, maybe you like skiing. But perhaps five years later, you aren’t so keen on skiing. Your interest has changed. My research, as you can see, has many different directions. I have a main goal to integrate them, but that is the same thing.

I ask students to choose the research that they really want to do. If you have a clear research idea, and you can explain your idea, I will try to see if we can make sure the idea can become a research topic.

If you do not have any idea, or you have a rough concept, maybe that you want to do educational stuff, or something else, then I will provide you with a maximum of 42 research topics, from the ones which I have in my head. I don't really do all of them, but I have 42 at this moment.

Every time I have an idea, I try to list them in my to-do list. If you have an area of interest, for instance if you want to do some artificial intelligence applications, then I provide a list from which you can choose.

Then when you choose, you will have a feeling that you are doing something that you want to do. So, you will push yourself, and you will do better. That is from my point of view.

When I was a student, I often heard from friends that professors asked them to do this and then told them to change to do that because the professor got another research project with government or another industry partner. That's not my style.

My style is "do what you want to do", and if I have an industry project I will not tell you to do it. I will ask all of my students. Who wants to do this just for fun, or for getting experience and improving your resume, or sometimes to make some money? But if no one wants to do this, I can hire a research assistant.

Actually, when I do research, I am doing research actively, which means you will push your progress harder than others if you are interested in doing the research. I don't really care about publications because I have a lot of publications. [Laughing].

Basically, I tell students, if you want to write a paper that is really good, but if you do not want it you do not need to do it. I will tell students why having a publication is a good thing. First, it will tell people what you have done.

Second, you can go to a conference and know a lot of new people and extend your social network, and of course, a side benefit is that most of the conferences are held in really beautiful places.

After knowing these, you might want to do something. And if you want to go further, some of our students want to go for a Ph.D., then publication is very important. You can show people you have the skill required for a Ph.D. student when you have some papers. You can also apply for a scholarship, which enhances your C.V.

But if you just want to do the research and want to go on a vacation after finishing the research, That's fine. So, That's my style. I do not push students. As I said, I have more than 40 different research topics, so I don't have to ask students to do a particular type of research.

This means if you look at my research you will find my research is all over. This year I have done this research, but then its follow-up research will come out two or three years later. Because two or three years later there might be students they will tell me that they are interested in that particular research, and we will do it again.

But I do not want to change. I've told many people that, because I think doing research is a fun thing. I think I heard a Nobel Prize winner, when the reporter asked him about another chance to do the research would he do it again, he said, "Of course, how can you find a job in which people will give you money to do what you want to do?"

I always think of the same thing. My research style is more like free will and versatile. I do not really push students. That is not always a good thing. But I think that will make you always do what you really want to do.

One of the implications of a professional career in research is the additional responsibilities such as chairing various associations, collectives, and organizations. What are some of the differing skill sets required outside of research for these co-professional activities?

That is a really good question because actually they are a different set of skills you will need to have. For example, currently, my major position in the research community is the new initiative chair for the IEEE TCLT.

So, my responsibility is not just to look for one research topic or one research direction, but a longer-term, like twenty or ten years later in a particular research field or area, and we are trying to propose these kinds of things for the whole research community.

For example, one new initiative proposed by other chairs is they want to connect different skills, such as troubleshooting skills, thinking skills. Every skill, to learning objectives of courses and learning topics and units. They also want to make sure that the required skills you have learned can be evaluated through correspondent activities that are designed and included in the courses, learning topics and units.

They want to make it so that when you are doing homework, when you reading a book, when you are trying to do programming, or writing a paper, your skills will be evaluated automatically. However, how can we do that?

We need to make sure that all of the kinds of skills can be taken into consideration, and then we need to analyze every detail for the different skills, and what skills and activities will factor in more than others. So, for the new initiative chair, the skill needed is to look broadly and have a future vision for the field.

And in other role in organizations, such as the Asia-Pacific Region Game and Toy Enhanced Learning and Society. For this one and others, your required skill will be helping the organization to build the community.

Now, we know there are so many people doing research on educational games, toys, or other things, like educational robots.

How can you help the organization to build the community to get researchers together to share their research results and try to make them collaborate with one another?

With such a community's help another researcher can begin to build the second floor on your first floor of research. So the research can be developed faster. Also, I need to help the organization to hold academic events like conferences, workshops, tutorials, and make sure we keep everything high quality.

The skill set used in these professionally relevant positions is very different than doing research, or a bit of management, or administrative level of the field.

What tends to attract students to AU?

They can learn in a personalized way. They can learn on their own pace, and they can learn based on what they really like. Many of our SCIS courses at the undergraduate 200-level courses provide activities that students can choose based on interest or preference.

Also, many of our professors right now are trying to use artificial intelligence, learning analytics, data mining, and other technologies, to help students learn better, and provide personalized feedback. Another thing is self-regulated learning, experience, and skill. You can nurture your self-regulated learning skill via learning with AU.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

Another important thing is the difference from ten years or twenty years ago. We have learned from textbooks, lectures, and teachers, but then we gained PowerPoint, multimedia, and so on in the classroom. Now, we have social media networks or things like that.

People may question online universities, not only AU, but learning anything online, because they do not see it as traditional. From my point of view, though, technology enhanced personalized learning and the teaching that AU aims to provide is the trend and the future of teaching and learning.

Thank you for your time, Professor Chang.

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Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AUSU Councillor. He works with various organizations, and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Canadian Science News

May 20, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Canadian scientists have discovered a new horned species of dinosaur

Spicylpeus shipporum (spi-CLIP-ee-us ship-OR-um), the Canadian Museum of Nature unveiled the fossils of the creature on Wednesday.

Bill Shipp named the dinosaur Judith “after the rocky area of his ranch where it was found, known as the Judith River formation.” The name for the dinosaur comes from the combination of two Latin words for “spiked shield,” and in honor of the Shipp family.

According to Dr. David Evans of the Royal Ontario Museum, the dinosaur was at least 10 years old at the time of its death. Interestingly, although it was a young dinosaur, it showed signs of arthritis and a bone infection called osteomyelitis.

Addressing the high expenses for scholarly journals

The Libraries and Cultural Resources (LCR) is going to be hosting a presentation by “one of the country’s leading experts on scholarly publishing” named Vincent Larivière.

He will present a “ground-breaking study into academic journal use at Université de Montréal (UdeM) which combined usage statistics and citation indexes with a qualitative survey of faculty on their preferred journals.” It created a “paradigm shift” at UdeM in their negotiations with publishers.

For instance, UdeM will now only keep 6.6 percent of an individual publisher’s material because that material accounts for approximately 42% of the total downloads. Expenses are a modern issue at universities. Tom Hickerson, vice-provost of UdeM, said, “At the University of Calgary, every time the dollar drops by a penny, \$100,000 in academic journal funds is lost.”

The Next Canadian Astronaut

The next Canadian astronaut has been announced as David Saint-Jacques. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Science and Innovation, at a news conference during Monday morning, described the qualifications of Mr. Saint-Jacque and “pretty impressive.”

He is an engineer, doctor, and astrophysicist. Jeremy Hansen is the other active Canadian astronaut. They will fly by 2019 and 2024. Saint-Jacques was selected out of a total candidate pool of 8,000 individuals.

Saint-Jacques is looking forward to “seeing the world floating in space just like in that photo I saw when I was a child.”

A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad and AUSU Councillor. He researches and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Canadian Education News

May 20, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Alberta students will set the definition of their own gender

New guidelines released by the Alberta government on Wednesday. The 21-page document put out by David Eggen, the Education Minister, advised teachers to permit the children to pick their name and the washroom used by them.

In short, the students have the right to self-identify their gender expression and identity, according to the document. Other rights or stipulations include the right to pick your pronoun, where the document states, “Right to be addressed by their chosen name and to choose pronouns.”

Other stipulations relate to elimination of activities for students based on gender, the ability to use male or female washrooms ? or neither, use preferred change rooms, and the establishment of gay-straight alliances are mandatory if desired by a student.

Canadian universities need more women leaders

According to a group of university presidents universities lack female leaders or women leadership. At a recent meeting of university presidents in Toronto, they held a session on “how to advance women’s leadership in postsecondary institutions.”

The group considers it an urgent problem. Vianne Timmons, the president of the University of Saskatchewan, said, “We still have universities in Canada that have never had a woman president. I was the first woman president in Saskatchewan.”

The session and meeting about women in leadership “comes at a time of renewed discussion around gender inequalities in Canada, from harassment and assault on campus to the persistence of the pay gap.

Holocaust education in Canada

The Holocaust was remembered recently with Yom Ha’Shoah or Holocaust Remembrance Day on May 4th and 5th. Canada became the home to 30,000 Holocaust survivors. Citizens from all of the Canadian political parties.

During the speeches at the event in Ottawa, the points were made about the prevention and response to genocide.

Naomi Azrieli and Alice Herscovitch said, “With the community of Canadian survivors fast disappearing, we have a responsibility to honour their steadfast work and take it up as our own.”

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Canadian Science News

May 27, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Clue to origins of life in Sudbury, Ontario

Scientists have discovered a possible clue to the origins of life. A “team headed by Dublin’s Trinity College in Ireland have found geological clues in Sudbury, Ont. that may help unlock more secrets of life’s origins.”

Ph.D. student Edel O’Sullivan studied the Sudbury crater to understand it. The meteor impact was from 1.8 billion years ago. The research team studied the crater and extracted samples to “view chemistry sequences” within the geology of the region, and it is believed that the impact may create local conditions that allow for new life to form.

O’Sullivan hopes other scientists, biologists, geneticists and environmentalists notice the work on the crater. O’Sullivan said, “there’s a really, really strong interest in the origin of life.”

Body Worlds coupling specimen 1st city in Canada is Calgary

Body Worlds will present its first human specimens coupled together in Calgary. That will be the first city in Canada for the display.

The cadavers are preserved through plastination, which is a process where water and fat is replaced by certain kinds of plastics, preventing decay and odor.

Body Worlds has visited over 100 cities. The coupling specimen is part of a collection human health and wellness called *Body Worlds Vital*. According to Ali White, Telus Spark staff, the bodies came as a surprise.

Museums don’t get lists with too many details about the incoming specimens. The Calgary coupling specimens do not feature a “fully erect penis,” but the woman is gently stroking the man’s cheek while the “pair are embracing.”

Climate Change/Global Warming and agricultural emissions

Bob McDonald of the CBC reported that to tackle climate change/global warming the focus needs to be on agriculture. According to Natasha Gilbert, agricultural emissions account for 1/3 of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions.

According to McDonald, we need to reduce greenhouse emissions while increasing production because there are “more and more mouths to feed.” He says, “The demands on food production are rising, and the world is not making any more land.”

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Interview with the Associate Vice President – Student and Academic Services

June 3, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Alain May is the Associate Vice President of Student and Academic Services for Athabasca University. She was kind enough to take some time from her busy schedule so that The Voice Magazine could bring you this interview. This week, we look at her background, how she became the Associate Vice President, and what that means.

You've earned a BSc in Computing Science and an MBA from the University of Alberta, and later a Ph.D. in Business (MIS) from the University of Calgary. What did these credentials teach you?

Certainly, content was an important part of what I took away from my degrees, the theory and understanding of new fields.

In my undergrad, I started in pre-med but realized, when I couldn't stay in the dissection lab for more than ten minutes without running out to breathe, that pre-med was not for me. I didn't know what to do at that point, a feeling which I'm sure many students can relate to.

My friends told me, "You're logical. You'll be good at computing science." I didn't know much about the field at all, but took a couple of courses and enjoyed them. So, I went into the field without much knowledge of it and, therefore, content was critical to my undergraduate education.

For the MBA, I started it soon after undergraduate graduation. I anticipated that I would be involved in software design mostly for businesses. So, I felt like I needed to understand business better to be able to design software in that context.

The Ph.D. was different. Theory was important, of course. However, what was most influential for me was that it introduced me to different philosophical perspectives. At the start of my degree, I viewed the world from a distinctly positive perspective. The Ph.D. altered how I thought about the world.

Overall, all of the degrees also helped me learn more about setting and achieving goals. You start out knowing that getting the degree is going to take a long time. Sometimes, you don't even trust that you can achieve that goal. I did the first year of my MBA part-time, while I was working full-time. I also had two babies during that time. Learning to stick with goals and finding ways to achieve them — even when life is happening around you — was an important part of my education.

Following that, you were a supervisor for the Technical Development Group for ACT Computer Services, and a senior product specialist for JDA Software. What skills and

talents developed from these positions? How did they feed into decisions to join the academic world such as at AU?

I certainly think that the position coming right out of school helped me to learn to apply the theory and practice I'd learned at school. It was one thing to learn how to program when you only had to make it work well enough for the professor to grade your program. [Laughing]

It was another for me to learn to build it for clients who needed to use the software day-in/day-out. It mattered that the program worked in a more full-featured way. It mattered that the software was easy to use. So taking all of that theory that I learned and applying it for real clients was an important part of what I learned in that first job.

Learning how to apply the theory and practice in different contexts was also important. In the Technical Development Group at ACT, I developed decision support systems. At JDA Software, I worked on an enterprise system for retail. I didn't go into either role with experience in those contexts so learning those environments was really important.

Also, learning to work as part of a team; that wasn't an important part of what we did in our university program at that time. So, learning to work as part of a team, and later learning to lead teams as I went through my career, were important skills to develop.

These roles were critical in my decision to go into academic life. I developed software for 13 or 14 years. I worked in large software projects with good, strong developers and implementers. Even so, we had these projects that failed at some point.

Everybody started out with good intentions and good skills but there was something holding us back from delivering in the way that we really wanted to. And so I was really interested in why. That was a big part of the reason that I decided to seek my Ph.D.

You have been part of the AU community since January 2006 through a broad suite of positions. What tasks and responsibilities come with those? And how does one target these positions to acquire them?

It's an interesting question. The professorial role is teaching, research, and service. So, teaching at AU is about creating quality courses, being that frontline person who works with students in an ongoing way in some courses, in others, working with the tutors and academic experts to make sure there is strong academic support. My area was Management Information Systems in the Faculty of Business. Research at AU is about 40% of your time.

Also, there's service. Universities are collegial governance institutions. So, your participation in committees, in the life of the university, is really important. All three are important parts of the professorial role.

I took on the roles of associate dean and MBA program director after my research and study leave in 2013. As the associate dean, an important responsibility was working on AACSB accreditation for the Faculty of Business. The program director role was about working with the

program faculty and the dean to set academic direction for the program as well as working with program students.

In the Associate Vice President (AVP) role, I am a member of the executive team with overall responsibility for student and academic services. I have a variety of teams: Office of the Registrar, Learner Support Services, Centre for Learning Accreditation, Library and Scholarly Resources, Student and Academic Services Web Unit, AU Press, and Learning Services Tutorial.

We have also added Learning Resources, which wasn't initially in the portfolio. The responsibility in this unit is the distribution of learning resources to students. That covers the first part of the question.

The second one is interesting to me. I have to say that I'm not sure I necessarily targeted these positions in the way that maybe you mean. In my career, I have tended to follow my interests. So, for example, if we look at the accreditation piece, when I first came into the institution in 2006, there was a call in the Faculty of Business for somebody to join the accreditation committee.

I thought to myself, "Wow! This would be a great opportunity to learn the ins and outs of the faculty because the accreditation committee has to look at many aspects of the faculty – learning objectives and outcomes, how we serve students, our faculty and faculty processes, our programs and courses, etc."

So, this would be a great opportunity for me to get that broad vision of the institution and this faculty that I've joined. I followed that interest, and it became something that I was really committed to.

I appreciated the accreditation's focus on quality, and felt like it was going to serve us well in the faculty. Out of that came the associate dean accreditation position. It wasn't that I went out necessarily targeting administration, but followed my interest and passion for that idea and out of that grew opportunities.

The AVP role that I'm currently in is a very similar thing. Through the various roles I've had - program director at the MBA, the associate dean role, and in my work with students as a professor, I became interested in, and had a passion for, student service.

The connection of that to how good students can achieve their desired outcomes in online education was clear to me. So when the opportunity for an AVP of Student and Academic Services presented itself, I felt like it really connected with my interests in the institution, and I felt like I had something to contribute there.

Again, I wouldn't have said that I thought to myself years ago, "Hey! I am going to be the AVP in Student and Academic Services." Rather, I followed my passion and interests.

That seems different than the standard narrative given to undergraduates. That seems to be: “You get your first two years. You get your associates. Do another two years, and you get your bachelors. Then apply for graduate school, and get grants.

Then your masters. From there, you can get your Ph.D. Finally, you can apply for positions at this point as an adjunct, and so on, likely with low pay. After some time, if You’re lucky, you may get a tenure-track position.”

At each stage, for at least a decade of formal post-secondary education, you have a narrative built around targeted acquisition of professional positions for a particular career path. But That’s different than what you’ve done.

Yea! I don’t know that I would hold myself up as the model people should follow, but it worked for me. There’s of course also something about making some decisions along the way to seek new opportunities and new challenges. I did go do my MBA. I did go do my Ph.D.

I took opportunities that presented themselves. I think all of those are important. But, I wouldn’t say that I ever had that five- or ten-year plan that said this is exactly what my path is going to be. *I followed interests, passions, and skill-sets.*

What relates them in personal and professional interest, or is it a necessity of the career path?

It is about personal and professional interest, and I would also say that what relates them for me is an interest and passion in quality education and experience for students.

AU serves a really important role in the educational marketplace, and trying to find ways to help students in getting a quality educational experience is important. If I had to say there is a common factor among all of those roles, it is that for me.

What is the most important experience, on a personal level in a professional context, for you in each of these professional stations?

There are many. For me, it is working with students who really underscore why I do what I do. It’s the student who didn’t thrive in a traditional institution, but then came to AU to get her degree after having been away from education for a while.

And AU worked for her. She ended up in a great job in her chosen field because this context worked for her in ways that a traditional institution didn’t.

And another particularly noteworthy one for me is a student who finished his last assignment in the hospital just before he died. Even when he found out that he had cancer, he decided his education was important to him. So, he chose to continue. Those are the stories that make me say, “This is why I do what I do.” Because we make a difference for students.

It happens in smaller, less big headline ways, too. There is the student you work with who didn't get something at first, just didn't understand and, somehow in your conversation with the student, they get it. They finally understand it.

Or, the student who signed up for your management information systems course knowing in his or her heart of hearts that it was never going to be a course that they were interested in, and then realized, "Wow, this is why this is important."

It is those big noteworthy, big headline, stories, but also those little ones working with them. Those are the experiences that most strike me.

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Canadian Education News

June 3, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Cooperative Education for Canadian Students

Canadian cooperative placements can give student two years of education and are appealing to Silicon Valley. These are paid placements for undergraduates with terms alternating between work and school.

According to the Matthews, these are attractive to some of the “world’s most desirable companies.” The largest cooperative program is at the University of Waterloo. Waterloo students were the “second most frequently hired in Silicon Valley.”

President of the Royal Bank of Canada, David McKay, said, “At Waterloo, I’ve seen first hand how co-op students are more demanding and curious, pushing their peers and professors to look for fresh insights and to think more broadly and creatively about problems.”

Most Education Tax Credits Claimed by the Highest-Earning Canadian Families

Over the last decade, the financial aid has befitted the families with higher incomes. This happened at the same time that there was “little to improve the affordability of college and university for the lowest earners.”

This reflects polarization of “accessibility of postsecondary education.” For example, the Registered Education Savings Plans is received more by rich families. Moreover, students graduate with more debt. Executive director at the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, Fiona Deller, said, “Mechanisms are always going to benefit those people who have extra income and pay attention to things like savings plans and education tax credits.”

Quiet Suffering of Undergraduate Students with Higher Debt

Post-secondary graduates are leaving their educations with tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Furthermore, those that are coming into postsecondary education have higher tuition rates now, which means burdens leaving and entering undergraduate education.

Universities and colleges are making an “attempt to lessen the load by offering financial aid” and “beefing up their mental health services.” Students are having mental health problems based on the debt.

Member of University of Toronto’s faculty of law, Dillon Collet, said, “we’re worried about one type of debt, student debt, and we want to know how to pay it off as quickly as possible.”

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Canadian Science News

June 10, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Bay of Fundy might give enough energy for all of Canada

The Bay of Fundy around Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is the not-so resting place of the “highest and strongest tides in the world.” It might be utilized for a sustainable and renewable form of energy called tidal power. The coastline at the bay narrows to 5km across. That “pinches” the water and speeds it up. At that point, there’s “14 billion tonnes of water moving over five metres a second.” It is that force that provides tidal energy.

Canada is not the only place having proposals like these come forward from entrepreneurs. Executive director of the Offshore Energy Research Association, Stephen Dempsey, said, “It’s happening in Europe and it’s happening here at the same time in the Bay of Fundy.”

Woolly Mammoth found

The New Royal Museum of BC has a 40,000-year-old baby mammoth. It has been moved around the world since 2010, and is on loan from the Shemanovskiy Yamal-Nenets District Museum and Exhibition Complex in Siberia. The ancient mammoth is known as Lyuba. A female, it’s named after the wife of Siberian farmer that found it. The mammoth drowned and then froze shortly thereafter, so is extremely well preserved.

This is the first presentation in Canada for it. The man that helped bring the exhibit to BC, Chris McGarrity, said, “It changes some misconceptions about what these animals were and how they lived, when they lived, where they lived, their evolutionary relationships. That’s something that I was really interested in.”

Four new exoplanets found at by UBC Student

A new graduate at The University of British Columbia, Michelle Kunimoto, discovered four new exoplanets. She sifted through data from NASA’s Kepler mission to find them. The mission used a powerful telescope that helped her research.

Technically, the ‘exoplanets’ are called planetary candidates because they require further independent verification. There were signals from “the original mission considered to be too weak to fully pursue.” Kunimoto collaborated with Jason Rowe, who worked on “original Kepler mission.”

Kunimoto said, “When he was able to say, ‘Yes, these look like planets,’ that was just an amazing moment.”

A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad and AUSU Councillor. He researches and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Interview with the Associate Vice President Student and Academic Services, Part II

June 17, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Alain May is the Associate Vice President of Student and Academic Services for Athabasca University. She was kind enough to take some time from her busy schedule so that The Voice Magazine could bring you this interview. This week, we look at her research, and what she feels is important for students of AU.

Your AU page says that your research interests reside in “enterprise systems, system implementation, and gender and information technology” and “user competency and IT outsourcing” (Athabasca University, 2015). Why these research interests? What interrelates them?

I think that, especially when we talk about the first three - “enterprise systems, system implementation, and gender and information technology” - those arise out of my experience in industry.

My last role at JDA Software was in enterprise systems and system implementation. It was the guiding decision for me about choosing to go back to school — to think about how we can implement enterprise systems in ways that are more successful in the organization. Enterprise systems are big cross-organizational systems.

They bring challenges to organizations because they affect business processes across the entire organization. They bring so-called “best practices” to organizations — practices that might work in other organizations but don’t necessarily fit with every process that an organization has.

These and other things cause challenges in how you do the system implementation. But having been involved in this industry, it is an area of interest for me — understanding how we go about these implementations.

Gender and information technology is one that, I think, also comes from my own experience. I went into computing science in something like 1982 (betraying my age!). However, there weren’t many women in the field at the time.

There aren’t many today; we certainly haven’t found some 50/50 place. So I’m interested in the ways in which IT is gendered. Both in terms of process and in why it is that it is gendered. So, That’s the interest in those areas, which come out of the background in industry.

User competency and IT outsourcing were two that really arose for me because I worked with some colleagues doing work in those areas. I had the opportunity to become involved and found them interesting. I haven’t done a lot in the IT outsourcing area.

I have one paper around IT outsourcing, but, certainly, user competency (how we develop information technology skills) is of continued interest. I would definitely say that the first three: enterprise systems, systems implementation and gender — would be my bigger areas of interest.

Tell us about Kibera, Nairobi, where you are developing the implementation of an electronic health record (EHR). What is this and what will it do?

Yes! I will say at the outset that in my new role I just haven't had much time to be continuing with this project. So, it isn't something I am currently working on to my disappointment; if I find some time to get back to this group, I certainly will.

An electronic health record is the electronic version of the patient chart. It stores the information about an individual's health encounters into an electronic information system.

Kibera is a large slum area in Nairobi. Because it was considered an illegal settlement, there isn't any government provision of healthcare. As a result, there are a lot of different kinds of healthcare clinics that have been started by various NGOs.

There are HIV clinics, TB clinics, child and maternal health clinics, but they're all very focused on specific diseases or chronic conditions, or specific kinds of healthcare. So if You're a resident in Kibera, there are few places where you can get care for the whole person. There is also no continuity of care across clinics.

So, the notion here was to create a cloud-based electronic health record. Different clinics could sign on to be part of the network, and they could share the electronic health record to create greater continuity of care in the provision of healthcare within Kibera. Clearly, this is critical to providing strong healthcare.

The project is also intended to impact the residents of Kibera through improved referrals. You could go to the one clinic in Kibera that has an ultrasound machine and be able to more easily share the results of that ultrasound with the clinic that sent you there. As well, by connecting the system to geographic information systems, it may be able to pinpoint epidemiological issues that are happening in Kibera.

A final benefit is that, partially because of the lack of information about healthcare in the area, there is almost no provision of health insurance. So, there was a notion that once this got up and running we would have better information on healthcare outcomes and that might lead to possibilities for healthcare insurance.

As the Associate VP of Student services, what do you think tends to attract students to AU? I would say different things for different students; I don't think there's one thing. If there is a common factor, it is probably flexibility, whatever flexibility happens to be for a particular person. You work full time.

You have family at home that you need to take care of. You don't want to leave your community. Regardless of your life context, you can seek education and work it around whatever happens to be going on in your life.

But flexibility is probably not the key attraction for every student. Some people just like the online environment better, I suppose!

What is important for students to know about academic and student life coming into AU?

I think students need to know they aren't alone here. It is making sure that students know that they are part of a community. They should and can reach out to their tutors, academic experts, and course coordinators about the course to seek academic support.

We have a strong set of student service professionals to help them: advisors, counsellors, our ASD unit for students that requires their services, and student communities through the AUSU and AUGSA, even Facebook.

There are communities of support around being a student at AU that when You're sitting in your office in your house working on a course might not be as readily apparent to you, but they're there. My experience in education was that community is important. Students need to know that these supports for students exist at AU.

What is the single most important moment in an instructor's life when teaching?

It is that moment when you know that you have reached a student in a way that has been important in their life in some way. That they understood something that they didn't before. That you helped them achieve a goal of theirs.

That you maybe helped them in a reference to a new job, right? It is knowing that you made a difference. That is the most important moment.

How can you make this connection with students in spite of the online nature of education at AU?

It's interesting. The mechanism is different, but overall I don't think the important part changes. I have taught in a traditional environment, and I have taught at AU. It is making yourself available and open to those conversations.

So, in a traditional institution, the students still have to know that they can come up to you at the end of a class or come to your office. It is about creating that same accessibility, even though instead of coming to your office, they will be calling you or contacting you through email.

It's about making sure that they know you are available and that you encourage that contact, regardless of how that contact is mediated.

What has been the greatest emotional struggle in personal life?

I was doing my Ph.D. It was early 2000s. My husband and I were involved in the technology area during the Dot-com bust and I needed to do quite a bit of sessional teaching to be able to finish my Ph.D.

So I was teaching, trying to finish a Ph.D., I had four kids, and then I ended up going through a divorce. It was extremely challenging. I mean, the number of times I thought, "Oh, I just cannot finish this."

Whether the details are the same or different, I feel like it is the story of what our students are going through. It is trying to complete these goals in their lives while real life is happening.

It was an extremely challenging time for me, and getting through it was about reaching out to the whole community of people I had. When I thought to myself, "I don't think I can do this anymore. I have to quit." It was those communities of people around me that helped me keep going.

What about professional life?

This is interesting. I think the one that strikes me the most is my first job out of university. What's interesting is the university environment is stressful, and in ways that You're not prepared for coming out of high school, which is when I did my undergrad degree.

It was a struggle, but then that first job out of university was emotionally difficult because it was my first experience with having to manage many stakeholders, delivering on something that mattered more than just if I got a good grade on it. I had clients depending on me, other team members depending on me, and learning how to manage those stresses was a challenging time for me.

That's the one that strikes me the most, learning how to manage some of those demands that go beyond yourself. And I think that first experience of it for me was challenging.

So what advice do you have for women in education who may have dependents, or are going through emotional struggles, to get the support that they need?

That's really interesting and hard. I don't know if I feel comfortable giving advice to anyone. I can speak about what worked for me and that is being willing to seek other people's help, so as I said, when I asked myself, "Oh, can I do this anymore?"

I went to my family and friends and asked for advice and asked for counselling, and support. My mom did a lot of babysitting. [Laughing] And those were all important things. It was looking around me in my community and in my circle for people who could support and who were willing to support.

It was about talking openly with my own family, my children, and asking for their support, bribing them with a family vacation when I finally finished my Ph.D. They picked the vacation

we went on! [Laughing] It was very much those things, and it was a little bit of just digging in, knowing what it was that I needed to achieve for myself, knowing that I would have been disappointed had I not continued.

I could've chosen to take some time out and people have to make those decisions along the way too. I decided, at the time, to just put one foot in front of the other and not get too overwhelmed, and so it was about very much seeking support throughout my community.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

I don't think so. I think it is such a wide-ranging interview. I really wasn't sure if I wanted to share some of the personal challenges, but I do think that It's really important that students know that many of us at AU have gone through similar things, too. There is support here. And I think that being open about the kinds of experiences we've achieved or had along the way is important.

I hope that's helpful in some way.

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Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AUSU Councillor. He works with various organizations, and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Canadian Education News

August 19, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

McGill offers bachelor of education, debuts in Listuguj First Nation

According to CBC News, McGill University will offer a bachelor of education program in September. It will debut in the Listuguj First Nation and “taught by community members with master’s degrees and doctorates.”

There have 25 students chosen out of 41 applicants, who are “all Mi’kmaq students from Listuguj, Eel River Bar, and Gesgapegiag First Nations.” The CBC news reports states many applicants hope to teach at the Listuguj school, Alaqsit’w Gitpu.

Darcy Gray, Listuguj Chief, said, “It’s being offered here in Listuguj taught primarily by our people and you’re going to see so much incorporation of our traditions, our culture, our history, our ways of learning traditional knowledge?”

Residential schools’ legacy some indigenous peoples’ trust towards Canadian education, study

According to Vancouver Metro News, a new study indicates that some indigenous people are “wary and fearful” of the Canadian educational system based on the “legacy of residential schools.” The study was published in the August, 2016 issue of *Canadian Review of Sociology*.

That “distrust” of the Canadian educational system can make parents “less engaged with teachers and could hurt children’s education.” The study was based on dozens of interviews with mostly indigenous educators and parents from southern Ontario.

Emily Milne, Assistant Professor of Sociology at MacEwan University and the researcher, explained almost all indigenous participant in the study was affected by the Residential school system. Milne said, “There was a bit less trust there with schools because of this history.”

University of Calgary school of medicine earns accreditation

University of Calgary Cumming School of Medicine (CSM) has received accreditation from the Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada. The accreditation system is common to “all North American medical schools” and is not easy. Of the 17 Canadian medical schools, 4 failed to achieve accreditation from this common system.

CSM has maintained that coveted status since its inception as a medical school in 1970. Once again, it is an accredited medical school for another 8 years based on the recent accreditation. According to Dr. Jon Meddings, Dean of Medicine, that 8-year term is the “best possible result.”

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Canadian Education News

August 26, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Alberta education minister supports LGBTQ students

According to Global News, David Eggen, Education Minister in Alberta, emphasized support for the LGBTQ community. He stated this in an open letter via the social media platform Facebook on August 16.

He said students should form Gay-Straight Alliances. In the letter, he said, “You have the right to feel safe and welcome at school. You have the right to use the washroom that is consistent with your gender identity. I want you to know that I will support each and every one of you.”

According to Eggen, Alberta Education will give resources to have “safe and welcoming” schools, where “rights are being respected.” He concluded the letter by saying, “And remember: I’m with you one hundred per cent.”

Students lose academic edge in the summer

According to CBC News, the University of Waterloo has done the first big study into the loss of literacy and numeracy skills in the summer for Canadian children. Previous research has focused on American students and shown that while there is little setback for children of more advantaged families, children of disadvantaged families can show between one and three months of literacy and numeracy skills loss over the summer.

2010/11 AU student demographics data show 31% of AU students have dependents. Many of their Canadian children are likely to go through this numeracy-literacy summer academic skill loss.

Janice Aurini, Associate Professor at the University of Waterloo, said, “It’s not because the parents don’t love their kids, It’s just they just don’t have the resources to help their kids.” The study was done in Ontario.

UBC Faculty of Education 9th in the World

According to The Georgia Straight, The University of British Columbia’s Faculty of Education was ranked as number nine in the world and fourth in North America based on the *QS World University Rankings*. It was ranked alongside 62 other Canadian schools and faculties of education.

Blye Frank, Dean of the Faculty of Education, says that new discoveries on the neuroscience of learning are changing education. Methods of assessment have changed with this research, which takes into account Indigenous students.

Frank said, “Students here who do the IB concentration graduate with the B.Ed., but they also graduate with a certificate which allows them to teach in any IB program or school in the globe.”

Canadian Education News

September 2, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Immigrant families educated about Canadian education system

According to *The Globe and Mail*, 100s of immigrant families learned about high schools in Canada through the Newcomers Orientation and Welcome to B.C. (NOW B.C) event, which took place on the morning of August 29.

Jerry Wu, Manager of the Settlement Workers Schools program, said over 500 students registered for the orientation. It familiarizes families with how Canadian high schools function. Youth ambassadors and Wu collaborated to have the NOW B.C. event.

Wu said, “For the parents, they feel much more comfortable because they are newcomers and the culture of their schools is very different from ours. Here, the parents are partners of the education with the schools,” said Wu.

Spruce Grove pastor refuses to comply with Alberta education minister on LGBTQ rights issue

According to *CBC News*, a pastor from Spruce Grove who manages 2 private Christian schools refuses to comply with the Alberta Government’s policy regarding the issue of LGBTQ rights. Brian Coldwell, the pastor, said, “I have a duty as a pastor to protect the flock of God.”

Coldwell is Chair of the Independent Baptist Christian Education Society. He accused the Alberta education minister of using “dictatorial power.” David Eggen, Alberta Education Minister, “instructed boards to submit LGBTQ draft policies by the end of March.

Coldwell said, “There is no way under heaven I’m going to allow gay activists to come in here and basically undermine our ministries and our religious freedoms or confuse or corrupt our children.”

Research Lab and teaching tool through adult music lessons

According to *University Affairs*, a McGill University Ph.D. candidate in her final year, Lisa Lorenzino, is conducting an intergenerational experiment with music lessons. In an undergraduate class, students “create an arrangement or composition and teach it to the music education programs Lab Band.”

Usually, Lab Band is made of experienced students rather than inexperienced adults. It is now considered intergenerational with the help of the New Horizons Montréal ([link](#)) ensemble, an inexperienced bilingual wind and percussion band for adults that seeks to teach beginners Audrey-Kristel Barbeau, Band General Director, said, “At one point we even had a 17-year-old girl playing and someone who was 74.” It is a 50-member group open to anyone. Lorenzino’s research makes music lessons double as a tool to teach and a research experiment.

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Canadian Science News

September 2, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Strong radio signal from nearby star a false alarm

According to CBC News, scientists detected a radio emission which has them excited. A space telescope from Russia detected a “strong signal” from a star. The star’s, HD 164595, strong signal was detected with a Russian radio telescope called Ratan-300.

Ken Tapping, a scientist at NRC Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory, said the signal might be the product of an “advanced radio transmitter.” SETI, or the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, is looking into the possibility. Tapping asked, “If they’re pointing it in our direction, why? There’s a million directions you can point the radio telescope.” According to Tapping, the signal detected by Ratan-300 from HD 1645959 takes 100 years to travel to Earth.

However, subsequent processing revealed that the signal was most likely from earth, according to a later CBC report

Schulich Leader scholarships have awarded to Canadian students

According to CNW, the *Schulich Leader* Scholarships winners are going to university now. It is the fifth year of the scholarship program for high school graduates with the intention to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines.

1,500 Cégeps and high schools participated in the program, which set a new record. A total of 220 students have been awarded the scholarship through its 5 years of existence. 20 universities participate in the program. Each gets 2 awards. The 5 universities that acquire the most applicants earn 2 more awards for a total of 4.

Seymour Schulich, the Founder of the *Schulich Leader* Scholarships, said, “It is very important that we support exceptional students that demonstrate great leadership and embrace STEM fields.” There are 25 \$80,000 scholarships for students pursuing engineering and 25 \$60,000 scholarships for students pursuing degrees in science, technology, and math.

3,772 applicants for the Canadian space program

According to CBC News, 3,772 “would-be astronauts” applied to the Canadian space program through the Canadian Space Agency. In June, the Canadian Space Agency announced the 4th campaign of recruitment for 2 positions.

With the close of the applications process in August, of the total applications, 24% were women and 69% were men. The remaining percent “did not declare their sex.” The disclosure of that information was voluntary for the applicants.

That majority were from Canada with only 374 living outside of the country. After the initial selection process, those selected will undergo a more “rigorous selection process.” The process will last a year. After the next summer, the final selection will be made on the two new applicants who will begin training with NASA.

Canada Education News

September 9, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Expert emphasizes the need for Indigenous education in school

According to *CBC News*, with students going to school for the Fall, an expert in “continuing the call for more Indigenous education” for Canadian classes. It is in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Charlene Bearhead, Education Lead for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, said, “We cannot separate out what the history is of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in this country it’s our history together.” In short, Indigenous and non-Indigenous history is Canadian history.

“The interference with the Indigenous knowledge that happened through residential schools and in other mainstream education about Indigenous people has also lead to the environmental issues that we’re facing now,” Bearhead said.

Job Market Tough, even After Graduating

Post-secondary school graduates face difficulties in the job market upon graduation. In a report by *The Globe and Mail*, Elie Waitzer, a 2016 McGill University graduate in Economics, said, “I don’t think I was expecting to get my dream job right out of university, but it’s been a little tougher than expected.”

Many recent graduates have problems with the job market, even with the four-year degrees. Secure employment is a difficult thing to come by for the students. Students apply and complete undergraduate education in the hopes of possible secure employment.

Michael Bloom, Vice-President of Industry and Business Strategy at the Conference Board of Canada, said, “Preparing students for work is one of a lot of things that they do, but they don’t make it a priority at the same level that students do,” he said.

New visa requirements might hurt language schools

Also in *The Globe and Mail*, new visa requirements are weakening efforts to “attract foreign students” to the language schools across Canada. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is promoting Canadian universities and colleges in China at the moment.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada made alterations to the rules in the middle of July. Students now need two permits rather than one to study a second language (English or French). The rule changes have hurt Canada in the “lucrative market for foreign students.” Kerriane MacKenzie, International Centre for English Academic Preparation, said, “The blanket installation of this policy will be potentially devastating to what is an incredibly dynamic economic sector for Canada.”

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Canadian Science News

September 9, 2016
Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Ocean Research Helped by Big Donation

A Nova Scotian billionaire donated \$25 million towards one research project, focusing on the ocean, at Dalhousie University. \$93.7 million will be contributed by the federal government as well.

CBC News Nova Scotia reports that it is a “seven-year Ocean Frontier Institute project” with a total of \$220 million being invested into its research program. Scott Brison, President of the Treasury Board of Canada, said, “Today’s announcement will demonstrate to Canadians and to the world that, in Canada, science is back.” The Ocean Frontier Institute will have collaborations between international scientists and students. “Prime Minister Trudeau committed that as ... a government we would elevate science and evidence-based decision making and we are fulfilling his commitment with action,” Brison said.

University of Saskatchewan gets more than \$77 million for water research

According to *CBC News Saskatoon*, University of Saskatchewan is receiving “more than \$77 million” for research into various issues around water throughout Canada from the federal government. The money will be for Global Water Futures.

Global Water Futures studies water quality, droughts, and floods. The University of Saskatchewan has stated that this is the biggest grant for research on water in history. Aspects of the study will look into management of water threats, water consumption reduction, and Indigenous water quality issues.

Peter Stoicheff, President of the University of Saskatchewan, said, “The University of Saskatchewan and its many national and international partners will transform the way communities, governments and industries in Canada and other cold regions of the world prepare for and manage water-related threats?”

Stem-cell doctor scandal gets 2 Nobel prize judges dismissed

According to *CBC News Health*, the awarding panel for the Nobel Prize in medicine is dismissing two judges, who have been caught in a scandal because of a “disgraced” stem cell scientist, Dr. Paolo Macchiarini. Harriet Wallberg and Anders Hamset are being dismissed from the panel. The stem cell scientist was from Stockholm’s Karolinska Institute.

The panel consists of 50 members. The Nobel Prize in medicine will be announced next month. Both dismissed judges have left their jobs at the Karolinska Institute because of the criticism and the management of the scientific misconduct.

Dr. Macchiarini was considered a “pioneer in windpipe transplants.” Now, he was fired because of falsifications in his resume and misrepresentation of professional work by him. He is being investigated for involuntary manslaughter because of two patients that died. He has disputed the charges.

Canadian Education News

September 16, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

The Canadian International Engagement Challenge

There is a “significant challenge” for Canadians to get students to take advantage of the international opportunities available to them in countries around the world, according to *The Times Higher Education*. A recent Canadian Bureau for International Education survey of 1,300 students from Canada found that those participating abroad found the experience “significantly” improved the outcomes for learning.

These are important steps to take for Canadian students to become global citizens. Canada is a “major trading nation whose continued prosperity hinges on cross-border mobility of people, goods and services.”

Public Education Defense in Canada and the Americas

According to the *Calgary Herald*, the many skilled immigrants in Canada are “struggling to work in their field,” even as some consider international students “ideal immigrants.” The assumption is integration should be easier for them because of Canadian education experience.

According to a 2015 Canadian Bureau of International Education, half of the international students in Canada want to stay here. However, employees of the CBIE state more work needs doing to have this immigration strategy become more effective.

John McCallum, Immigration Minister, in Ottawa in June said, “I have not had one person disagree with me when I say international students are a very fertile recruiting stream for us. They’re young, educated, they speak English or French. They know something about our country.”

Defense of Nunavut schools by Minister

According to *CBC News: North*, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) considered Nunavut’s educational system “grossly inadequate” for resource provision and a “national embarrassment.” Nunavut’s Education Minister defended the territory’s educational system as being “very rigorous”.

The Nunavut government had been finishing consultations on potential changes to the Education Act, which arise from a 2015 review. These were “dramatic recommendations.” Concerns about educational quality have been heard before.

For example, a 2013 Auditor General’s report stated there was inadequate delivery of differentiated learning necessitated by policy set for the Department of Education. Apparently, the instructors “were overwhelmed and struggling to meet the needs of their students.”

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Canadian Science News

September 16, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Canadian researchers “starved” for cash

According to the *Toronto Star*, the “everyday researchers” are starved for funds for their projects. Even as the Institute for Quantum Computing in Waterloo received \$76 million, the claim is that the bulk of the researchers, particularly the young and upcoming ones, are not getting enough funds.

Other projects included the University of Saskatchewan, which received \$78 million for flood and drought prediction, McGill University received \$84 million for brain research, Université de Montréal received \$94 million for “big data,” and two of Alberta’s biggest universities received \$75 million for clean energy.

13 major “centres of higher learning,” divvied a total of \$900 million in grants from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF). The CFREF was designed to be assistive in the development of the post-secondary institutions in Canada into “global research leaders.”

NASA mission onward to discover origin of life

There will be a spacecraft sent to an asteroid to gather samples from its surface, according to a report by *CBC News: Technology & Science*. The launch begins on Thursday and will take a total of 7 years to complete the roundtrip to the Asteroid, Bennu, and back.

This is done by NASA. It is the “organization’s first send-and-return mission to an asteroid,” which has potential implications for discovering the “origins of life on Earth.” The spacecraft is call OSIRIS-Rex, also known as the Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, and Security-Regolith Explorer.

Dante Lauretta, the lead of the mission, said, “We’re going to Bennu because it’s a time capsule from the earliest stages of solar system formation.” The asteroid is spherical and roughly 500 meters in diameter with an orbit akin to Earth’s. Its day is only 4 hours, which helps OSIRIS-Rex do its mission.

Biggest Science Literacy Week

According to *Phys Org*, the only Canadian-led experiment through the operations of the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva Switzerland has produced its first set of results. The Canadian initiative is called MoEDAL (the Monopole and Exotics Detector at the LHC).

MoEDAL is a collaboration between 26 institutions represented by 70 physicists. Dr. James Pinfold, Professor at the University of Alberta, is leading the organization. The first paper published from the results in the research will be in the *Journal of High Energy Physics*.

In the search for magnetic monopoles, which are hypothetical elementary particles, this Canadian-led research “marks a significant milestone in the search for magnetic monopoles. Pinfold said, “In a sense, the magnetic monopole is the brother of the electron.”

Canadian Science News

September 30, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Canadians fall short and long on scientific literacy

Science Literacy Week was from September 19th to September 25th, and according to *Radio Canada International*'s Marc Montgomery, Canadians topped one list of science literates in a 2014 survey. But another survey by the Ontario Science Centre showed significant gaps in the science knowledge of Canadians.

“19 percent of Canadians still think there is a link between vaccinations and autism,” Montgomery said. There is no connection between vaccinations and autism. 47% of Canadians can understand basic news reports, which means the rest cannot in full.

Montgomery said, “The 2014 findings were gathered from 2,000 Canadians polled in 2013, [the results] left Canada on top.” Even though the majority do not understand basic news science reports.

Canadians face tough competition for the Nobel Prizes

According to *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's international reputation as a leader in research might get a boost through Nobel Prizes being won “back to back.” Art McDonald, based on a neutrino experiment close to Sudbury Ontario, won a Nobel Prize in Physics last year.

And although Governor-General David Johnston's has worked to “ensure Canada's research institutions are nominating their most worthy scientists for the Nobels,” Canadian scientists have tough competition this year based on data produced by Thomson Reuters.

The list of nominees is meant to see the researchers with the greatest “achievements and impacts most closely” matched with prior awardees. October 3rd will be the date of the announcement for the 2016 Nobel Prize winners.

Canadian pharmacies and natural health

According to an article by Ubaka Ocbogu and Candace Necyk in *The Globe and Mail*, your pharmacist and Health Canada might have approved the sale of conclusively disproven 'health products' such as “fancy homeopathic children's cough medicine,” which is “nothing more than expensive water.”

In spite of the Health Canada 'seal of approval', “many of the natural health products Canadians buy and use are simply not backed by science,” Ocbogu and Necyk said. In a survey of 400 pharmacists in Alberta, most recommend natural health products. Some rely on Health Canada only for approvals.

But the current state of approvals will change soon. Ocbogu and Necyk noted that, “The changes are largely motivated by loopholes in the existing regulatory framework, which allows the licensing of products that do not meet scientific standards for safety and efficacy.”

Canadian Education News

September 30, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

'Generations lost' due to low funding for Indigenous schools

According to *CBC News: Manitoba*, “generations” are being lost due to the underfunded Indigenous schools. There are “persistent” shortages “faced by” First Nations students, which the article says requires school divisions to demand a federal government fix for the underfunding.

Sherri Rollins, Winnipeg School Division Chair, sees this as an unfortunate possibility for students because of “chronic underfunding” on reserves. Rollins estimates underfunding of \$4,000 to \$6,000 per student on reserves.

“We have many reserves in Manitoba that don’t have high schools. People are unable to complete their education that we’ve agreed for decades and decades and decades in this country that that’s the bar, a high school education,” she said.

Statistics Canada to examine the number of part-time, and contract professors

Statistics Canada will be tallying the number of part-time, contract professors in Canada. According to *The Globe and Mail*, Kirsty Duncan, the Minister of Science in the Government of Canada, announced plans for this as being “essential” information to gather for the Statistics Canada database.

She notes that this will assist in the development of more diverse and inclusive universities. There have been statements from faculty unions across North America who have noted the decrease in the number of tenure-track positions for academics.

This is especially true for young academics. This might harm a generation of young researchers. Michael Martin, Chief of the Education Finance and Indicators Division of Statistics Canada, said, “There has been an evolution in the system, to part-time or not regular faculty-type members teaching.”

Infrastructure investment into The University of British Columbia

And from *Market Wired*, we find there has been a \$51.5 million investment into The University of British Columbia, which is part of an total investment of about \$100 million. Universities help the young of Canada become prepared for the future, which can “help them join a strong, healthy middle class.”

The money comes a combined federal-provincial monetary fund announced by the Hon. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and the Hon. Andrew Wilkinson, British Columbia’s Minister of Advanced Education, on September 19.

“This once-in-a-generation investment by the Government of Canada is a historic down payment on the government’s vision to position Canada as a global centre for innovation. That means making Canada a world leader in turning ideas into solutions?” Bains said.

Canadian Education News

October 7, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Canada spends more on some education than other countries

Canada spends more on primary education than other countries, but does not produce similar strong results of some other countries, according to *Global News*. This translates into poorer performance for employment prospects.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Canada “isn’t doing a great job of keeping post-secondary graduates employed.” Canada spends more on the average primary school student and produces worse results than Belgium, for instance.

“Canadian public expenditure on education” comes to 2.3% of total spending (OECD mean). However, in spite of the poor employment prospects, Canadians have more “post-secondary education than anywhere else.”

Canadian professor criticizes “political correctness”

According to *Times Higher Education*, one Canadian professor criticised university policy based on “political correctness” and objected to legislation by government. The government legislation would “prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.”

Psychology Professor at the University of Toronto, Jordan Peterson, considered mandatory anti-racism and anti-bias training for human resources staff as “political training.” Peterson sees these as “associated with radical Left ideology.”

He added that it assumes that racism and bias exists at the university and that training is the best way to address this. Peterson stated human resources staff should “refuse to subject themselves to re-education regarding their putative racism and bias, unless they want to convict themselves.”

Kids being informed of the risks of sexting

Grade 4 Nova Scotia students are learning about the intricacies being safe on the internet. A story on *CBC News: Canada* reports how “teachers and schoolboards across Canada” are working to have students knowledgeable of online safety.

There is a growing concern around sexting amongst young people. For example, six teenage boys in the community of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, are in the midst of child pornography criminal charges for the non-consensual sharing of “intimate images.”

A 14-year-old student at Bluenose Academy in nearby Lunenburg, Eva Purcell-MacIntyre, says, “You definitely have to think about the future, and you have to think about the situation. If you are under peer pressure, take yourself away from that peer pressure.”

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Canadian Science News

October 7, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Nobel Prizes for smallest of things

Nobel Prizes were awarded to three scientists for the development of the “world’s smallest machines” that might have applications in revolutionizing computers and batteries.

The winners, according to *Canadian Manufacturing*, were three men. “Frenchman Jean-Pierre Sauvage, British-born Fraser Stoddart, and Dutch scientist Bernard ‘Ben’ Feringa” earned the Nobel Prizes for machines “1,000th the width of a human hair.”

The winners were provided a monetary award as well totalling eight million kronor, or \$930,000. These will “will most likely be used in the development of things such as new materials, sensors and energy storage systems.”

Translation of competence into consistent interest

The Varsity reports that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are very important for the everyday concerns and revolutionary discoveries. These can assist in the development of new knowledge and the advancement of fields.

Fortunately, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) found “Canada scoring well above international averages for mathematics, reading, and science literacy.”

In turn, these competencies that facilitate discoveries “lead to improvements in our standards of living and quality of life.” However, an Ipsos Reid found an “inverse relationship between STEM interest and age.” That is, people lose interest in STEM with age.

Overfishing threatens stocks, again

And from *The Tye*, an article about how the Canadian fishing industry is “at risk of major stock collapse.” Canada’s fishing is a \$6 billion industry. Environment and Sustainable development commissioner, Julie Gelfand, warned of the possible collapse of the industry.

Gelfand warning came in her Fall report. In it, she stated 15 of the major Canadian fish stocks are “critically at risk.” Even so, they continued to fished. 12 of the 15 have no plans for reconstruction by the government. Gelfand was not aware of this number until the audit for the Fall report.

“We’re at potential risk for another stock to potentially collapse. It’s disconcerting that the department wasn’t aware of this, couldn’t wrap it up,” Gelfand said.

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Canadian Education News

October 21, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Post-secondary not providing support for the next generation

According to *Betakit*, there was a study by The Conference Board of Canada through its Center for Skills and Post-Secondary Education. They found the Canadian technology industry continues to grow and post-secondary students have further interest in that sector too.

However, “post-secondary education (PSE) institutions aren’t providing support for e-learning” to be able to prepare students for the “next generation of jobs.” E-learning is being adopted by multiple institutions across Canada.

It accounts for “10 to 15 percent of all full-time post-secondary enrolments”. The Vice President of Industry and Business Strategy at The Conference Board of Canada, Michael Bloom, said, “E-learning could profoundly change the way post-secondary education is designed and delivered.”

Attempts to capitalize on the marijuana industry in Canada’s schools

As well, *Maclean’s* has stated that Canadian schools are trying to make a profit from the marijuana industry. “Canadian producers are upping their game by brining in professional management” as the preparation for the legalization of marijuana takes place.

Marijuana, or cannabis, will be a legalized controlled substance with the estimated industry to be worth \$10 billion (CAD), which is based on CIBC estimations. With the maturation of the marijuana sales industry, there is an expansion into post-secondary institutions.

There has “been a push to have post-secondary institutions” provide the requisite training for this industry with an emphasis on “middle management”. Canadian schools could establish themselves as “global leaders in marijuana-related research and business training.”

BC sweeps the Canadian Innovators in Education Awards

Market Wired states that the British Columbia school districts have had a “clean sweep” for the 2016 Canadian Innovators in Education Award Winners. Reader’s Digest Canada and The Canadian Education Association (CEA) awarded three school districts for “promoting lasting, system-wide change for K-12”.

First prize is worth \$25,000. Second prize is worth \$10,000. Third prize is worth \$5,000. Profiles of the awardees will be present in the November issue of Reader’s Digest magazine.

First prize was award to the Fine Arts eCademy, which is Comox Valley School District 71.

Second prize was award to the School District 5 Southeast Kootenay in Cranbrook, B.C. Third prize was awarded to West Vancouver School District in West Vancouver, B.C.

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Canadian Education News

November 4, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

“Stronger legislation” needed to protect kids from Christian home school

According to CBC News: Edmonton, Wisdom Home Schooling, which teaches from grades 2 to 12, is “not registered with or accredited by the provincial government.” Bari Miller, a recent graduate of the Christian home-schooling organization, stated the need for stronger legislation by government.

When Miller attempted to apply to the University of Alberta, she found the transcripts were not accepted. “To me, it was a meaningless, worthless piece of paper,” Miller said. This sparked questions about her instruction at home.

The instruction, including Biblical analysis, prompted Miller to say “I really didn’t learn any science that would be acceptable to a lot of Canadian universities,” she said, “I was told that evolution didn’t happen, and just a lot of things that I think didn’t prepare me for the real world or for university.”

Alberta Education recently shut down the school.

Christian Pastor refuses to comply with LGBTQ policies set by Alberta Education Minister
The Barrhead Leader opined that Alberta Education Minister, David Eggen, must not cross lines. Lines associated with the recent decisions by Eggen. Two lines linked to LGBTQ policies in schools and compliance with section 16.1 of the School Act. The former line happened as Eggen told “schools and school boards that they must have policies” to provide protection for “students identifying themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ).

Pastor Brian Coldwell, Chair of the Independent Baptist Christian Education Society, did not comply with Eggen. The latter line was crossed with an inquiry launched by Eggen into the Independent Baptist Christian Education Society based on responsibilities to comply under section 16.1 of the School Act.

University of Alberta Professor wants re-education for judges on “Alternative Sexualities”

In addition, LifeSite reports that a professor from the University of Alberta (U of A), Kris Wells, wants to have re-education for judges in diversity and about “alternative sexualities.” This is based on a “custody battle that included two family court rulings,” which prevented “a boy from wearing skirts in public.” Wells is from the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at U of A. He is counselling the mother of the five-year-old. The father is against it. Two of three judges support the dad and the third supports the mother and the boy. Wells advocates for anti-bullying policy within schools in Alberta.

“These kinds of decisions shouldn’t be happening, particularly when our human rights legislation has changed,” Wells said, “[Gender identity in Alberta is now grounds for discrimination along with religion, ethnicity, age, sex, etc]. Some of these attitudes need to be challenged and corrected.”

Canadian Science News

November 18, 2016

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Canada in search for the national science advisor

According to Science Magazine, there will be an opening for nominations by the Canadian federal government for the national science advisor, which was announced at an annual science policy conference by Minister of Science Kirsty Duncan.

The nominations will be open to the average “Canadians, researchers, as well as institutions such as universities.” This is based on a promise by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He vowed “to usher in an era of evidence-based policy.”

“We want to make sure we get a wealth of expertise in science. They have to be respected by the scientific community,” Duncan said, “They have to understand the research community, as well as how government works. And they have to be a very good communicator.”

Canadian scientists hint at alien life

The Globe and Mail reports that a Canadian research team is on the look out for alien life. Universite Laval, in Quebec City, researchers analyzed some signals with unusual traits. They made identifications of “234 potential systems that might be playing host to extra-terrestrial intelligence (ETI).”

Emanno Borra published an article in 2012, which speculated on Milky Way galaxy extraterrestrials trying to make their existence known to others. Borra described the possibility of aliens using lasers to make their “home planet” emit unusual signals.

Borra said, “The signal we found is in agreement with the ETI hypothesis, but right now It’s still a hypothesis that must be confirmed with further work.”

Oil spill research and Environment Canada

“A team of Environment Canada scientists is trying to fill key research gaps among oil spill response officials as a looming increase in oil tanker traffic raises worries for coastal communities,” iPolitics says, “Environment Canada and Climate Change has been producing field guides.”

The guides are on the behavior of oil in water after long periods. The Director of Science and Technology Policy at Environment Canada, Jen Collette, described the non-digitization of the guides and technical language as barriers to wider availability of the guides.

Collette stated that since the guides are physical, not digital, “You’ve either got one or you haven’t got one.” Even with acquisition, they might be difficult to access conceptually because of the “fairly technical language.”

A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad and AUSU Councillor. He researches and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Canadian Education News

January 13, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Chinese billionaire seeks input for education prize

The Globe and Mail reported on a Chinese billionaire and entrepreneur, Charles Chen Yidan (45), who is seeking ideas for his education prize from Canadian universities. He assisted with the creation of Tencent Inc., which is an Internet instant messaging platform, and founded “the most lucrative annual prize for educational development in the world and donated \$320-million (U.S.) for an endowment.” Which will be provided as two \$5-million dollar awards each year for projects related to educational research and development.

“For me, education is extremely important...It propels humankind, but also it will be a tool to resolve the problems society is facing,” Yidan said, “If you talk to educators, they are talking about some common issues.?”

Aims to increase opportunities for University of Saskatchewan students abroad

CBC News reports that University of Saskatchewan (U of S) “officials” want to increase the opportunities for its students greater to be able to study abroad. However, only 3.5% of students took part in the programs to study abroad.

One Canadian Bureau for International Education report found, even with the 2.3% of Canadian university students participating in study abroad programs in the 2014-15 academic year, 86% of students had an explicit interest in studying overseas.

Derek Tannis, of the U of S International Student and Study Abroad Centre, said, “Our way of talking to students, or the way we campaign, is that everyone can go abroad.”

University of Saskatchewan announces tuition rate hike

According to Thomas Piller of *CBC News*, the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) will be hiking tuition for students in the next academic year by “an overall weighted average of 2.3%.” “U of S Board of Governors approved increases ranging from zero to five per cent for undergraduate and graduate programs in 2017-18,” Piller said.

Lee Ahenakew, Board Chair for U of S, said, “We understand overall affordability is a significant consideration for our students and their families,” Ahenakew said, “and we strive to keep tuition increases manageable, while still ensuring the quality of our programs remains high.?”

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Canadian Education News

January 27, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

The Accidental Brain Drain of Canada

According to University Affairs, Adam Crymble described developing in a small town in Ontario, Canada. He felt as though Canadians who moved abroad were traitors in some sense. “They had shunned our country for monetary gain, or sunshine or fame.” Crymble said, “But I’ve become one of those people - part of the nation’s brain drain - and I can assure you that it was entirely accidental.”

Hundreds of Canadian citizens travel abroad each year. Some don’t come back. In short, we undergo a Canadian brain drain to other countries. We lose some of our brightest.

U.S. applicants at Canadian universities on the rise

The Globe and Mail reports that Canadian universities have been a “surge” in applicants from the United States. It is not “that today’s students are dodging Donald Trump the way their grandparents dodged Vietnam, university admission experts say.”

Rather, according to many Canadian universities, U.S. applicants for the 2017-18 academic year increased by 20% to 80% based on an informal survey by The Globe and Mail. For example, “Trent University in Peterborough, Ont., say they have seen applications from the United States increase by more than 60 per cent.”

The source of the uptick in applicants appears to be the successful efforts for recruitment of American students to come to Canadian universities. Also, the drop in the Canadian dollar appears to be an incentive too.

Even with higher education credentials, Asian job seekers face challenges

The Toronto Star notes that a recent study found job applicants with “Asian names and Canadian qualifications” are called less for interviews compared to “their counterparts with Anglo-Canadian names even when they have a better education.”

The study examined “interview callback rates for resumés with Asian and Anglo names.” Those with Asian names were called less. The size of the company applied to did not affect the outcomes for the number of calls.

A master’s degree can increase the Asian candidate opportunities for a callback. However, Anglo applicants with equivalent undergraduate qualifications received many more callbacks. They were better off.

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Canadian Education News

February 3, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Canadian Christians are behind in education

According to The Catholic Register, the Canadian Christian population “is less educated than Canadian Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and even those who have no religious affiliation.” This is based on reportage from the Pew Research Center.

The Pew Research Center, based in the United States, conducted a global study of the education level among various religious groups. Based on the analysis, Canadian Christians average 12.7 years of and Canadian Jews average 14.3.

David Seljak, St. Jerome’s and Waterloo University sociologist of religion, reports that age and immigration suffice to explain the differences. “Immigrants tend to be better educated than the Canadian average since the point system filters out the under-educated,” Seljak said.

Canada makes call to international students

The New York Times says that Canada is making an open call to international students with a path to citizenship. One young Chinese woman, Fei Jie, at the College of the North Atlantic said, “The environment here is really good, so I think for my health I will stay,” said Fei Jie, from China’s eastern Shandong Province.

There are tens and hundreds of thousand of international students within Canada that remain a crucial element in the governmental plans to change the landscape of Canadian demographics “by funneling well-educated, skilled workers through the university system.”

That is, it is a conscious federal strategy to incorporate international, highly educated, and skilled workers. It is necessary, too. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada reports that immigrants comprise 75% of the annual net growth for Canada. It could account for 100% in a decade.

A university graduate program would enhance Canadian competitiveness

University Affairs reported that Brenda Brouwer, President of the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, said, “In Canada, labour outcomes for earned doctorates have remained steady over the past 15 years.” Canada is behind other Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries in the keeping pace with the need for the development of the Ph.D. population. That’s an issue in the modern knowledge economy.

One inhibitory mechanism in the ability of students to be able to train is the higher cost of education. Student debt is high and it is difficult for students to pay back their debt and to pay the credit interest rates. It has been suggested that this could be alleviated if postgraduate student debt was restructured under the same type of terms as mortgage debt. “If that same individual was in the workforce and applied for a mortgage to buy a house,” University Affairs said, “she or he would have up to 25 years to repay the debt and would be charged current mortgage rates.”

Canadian Education News

February 10, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Research Chair announced for STEM Teaching and Learning

Simon Fraser University has announced that Rina Zazkis, Associate Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University, has been appointed the new Research Chair in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Teaching and Learning. The announcement was made by the Honorable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science.

Canadian government and educators want more students in these four, key academic subject areas. Zazkis will focus research in the area of improvement of “training for high school mathematics teachers.”

“My research program will help strengthen the preparation of high school mathematics teachers,” says Zazkis. “The Canada Research Chairs program will provide an innovative contribution to mathematics teacher education, which in turn will contribute to the quality of mathematics teaching and the successful experiences of learners.”

Internships and Startups combine

The Globe and Mail reports that the provision of internships at various startup companies will provide students the necessary opportunities for the demonstration and identification of the students’ interests, skills, and talents.

Within their post-secondary education, Canadian students acquire “both fundamental expertise in their subject areas and a competency for learning and acquiring new skills.” The core knowledge tied to flexibility makes students better suited for the knowledge economy.

Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Navdeep Bains, made the recommendation for “educational institutions and businesses [to] ’expand work-integrated learning programs for Canadians at every stage of their careers.’”

Students and faculty being helped by Canadian universities in light of immigration ban

The Globe and Mail said, “The American immigration ban that is the subject of a battle between Donald Trump and the country’s courts has mobilized universities around the world because it strikes right at the heart of the principles of higher education.”

Based on an executive order from America President Donald J. Trump, seven predominantly Muslim countries’ citizens have been barred from entrance into the United States, but a federal judge has suspended the order from the President.

Canadian universities have rapidly mobilized to open admission or research labs for students and faculty that have been left ’high and dry’ by the ban from the United States. This has been seen as a “fundamental threat to the free exchange of ideas.”

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