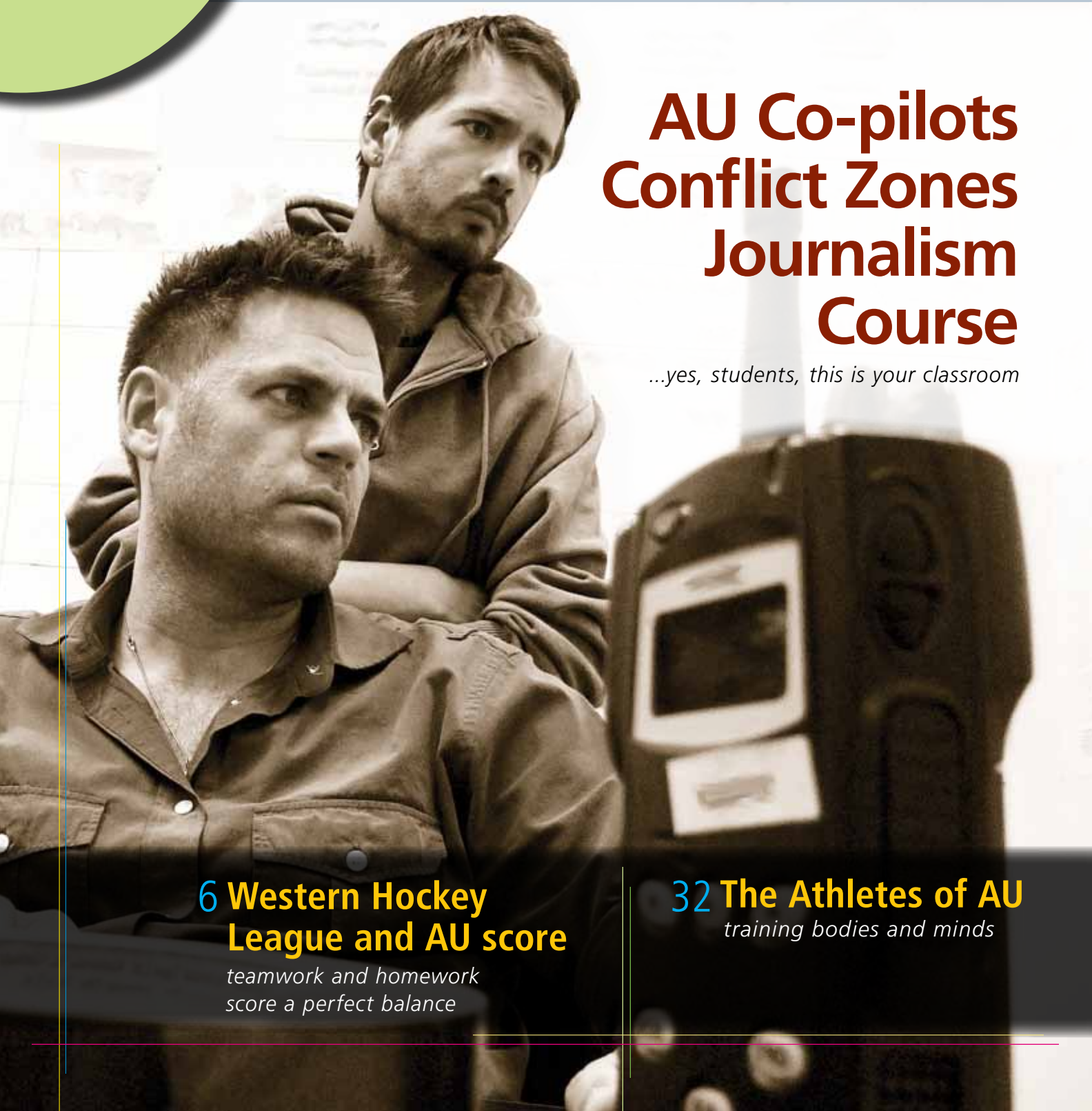


# open

No. 2  
2009/2010

a sense of community



## AU Co-pilots Conflict Zones Journalism Course

*...yes, students, this is your classroom*

### 6 **Western Hockey League and AU score**

*teamwork and homework  
score a perfect balance*

### 32 **The Athletes of AU**

*training bodies and minds*

## ABOUT THE COVER

**12** Military personnel are highly trained to react in intense situations — but what about journalists — whose training in a controlled classroom environment is focused on “who, what, when, where and why”?

In May 2009, Athabasca University, in conjunction with the Department of National Defence, premiered a six-month *Journalism in Conflict Zones* course featuring an on-site field experience practicum held at CFB Wainwright. “There are currently no other opportunities in Canada for journalism students to acquire first-hand knowledge of the military and of working conditions in conflict zones,” says AU’s Dr. Evelyn Ellerman.

Read more about how war is seen through the eyes of conflict journalists on page 12.



News room producer and AU mentor David Perlich and student Scott Martin discuss strategy for a story in the *Journalism in Conflict Zones* course.

**32**

AU’s Olympic pride,  
Perianne Jones.

Check us out online  
all year-round at  
[www.open-au.com](http://www.open-au.com)





## CONTENTS

- 02 FROM THE EDITOR
- 04 AU IN THE NEWS
- 09 OPEN BOOK FROM AU PRESS
- 10 STUDENT STORIES
- 16 MEET THE TEACHER
- 23 FACULTY HONOURS & AWARDS
- 26 FUND DEVELOPMENT
- 27 ALUMNI STORIES
- 30 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS
- 30 ALUMNI & STUDENT EVENTS
- 31 NOTABLE NEWS
- 31 AUSU HELPING STUDENTS GET TO WORK
- 36 IN THE OPEN



Open is printed on FSC certified paper.  
Open contents may be printed with acknowledgement.  
Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement #40065277.  
Undeliverable copies to be directed to Athabasca University,  
Advancement office, #1200, 10011 – 109 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8

## Features

- 06 WHL Teams Up with AU
- 12 Journalism in Conflict Zones Course
- 19 AU's Three New Honorary Doctorates
- 32 The Athletes of AU



## FROM THE EDITOR



Eva Von Buchenroder

There are lots of things that help bond a community. One of them is celebrating the achievements of its members. This year, the faculty, students, staff and alumni of the AU community have plenty to celebrate. From Olympic athletes and Western Hockey League players who successfully balance school and sport, to the alumni whose prodigious gifts have made the world that much more compassionate, progressive and grammatically correct, to the faculty and staff whose innovation and hard work continually enhance AU and its corner of the world — *Open* has their accounts.

In this second annual issue of the magazine, *Open's* contributors bring us stories from as close to home as Alberta and as far away as Africa. They are stories that provide a picture of a tight-knit community of people sharing common goals — one that defies the “distance” in distance education. So sit and take a minute to meet some outstanding people from the AU community. It's time to celebrate!

— Eva von Buchenroder, Editor

## GROUP HOME AND AUTO INSURANCE

for members of Athabasca University



### PROTECTION MADE EASY... GROUP RATES MADE EASIER!

As a member of **Athabasca University**, you can save on your home and auto insurance through **preferred group rates**, while enjoying **high-quality insurance products** and **outstanding service**.

[www.melochemonnex.com/athabascau](http://www.melochemonnex.com/athabascau)

**1 866 352 6187**

(Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.)

Insurance program endorsed by

**Athabasca University**   
CANADA'S OPEN UNIVERSITY

**TD Insurance**  
Meloche Monnex

The TD Insurance Meloche Monnex home and auto insurance program is underwritten by SECURITY NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY and distributed by Meloche Monnex Insurance and Financial Services Inc. in Québec and by Meloche Monnex Financial Services Inc. in the rest of Canada.

Due to provincial legislation, our auto insurance program is not offered in British Columbia, Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

Meloche Monnex is a trade-mark of Meloche Monnex Inc., used under license.

TD Insurance is a trade-mark of The Toronto-Dominion Bank, used under license.

# Open magazine is all about Athabasca University (AU).

We want to share with our cross-country community how AU contributes to life-long learning through the quality and diversity of what we have to offer, the excellence of our education and the significant contributions those associated with AU are making in our own communities and around the world. *Open* is published and distributed through various national daily and regional weekly newspapers in the autumn of each year.

Share your comments and inquiries with Nancy Biamonte, creative director, at 780-421-5049 or email at [open\\_magazine@athabascau.ca](mailto:open_magazine@athabascau.ca)

A glimpse  
at the people  
who helped  
make it happen

## CONTRIBUTORS

Editor: Eva von Buchenroder

Creative director: Nancy Biamonte

Graphic designer/print coordinator: Jennifer Luckay

Illustrator: Christopher Hunt

Writers: Patricia Balderston • Diane Morrison • John O'Brien

• Cathy Nickel • Erna Dominey • Jim McLeod

• Eva von Buchenroder

## AU – A good global citizen

*Open* magazine is printed on FSC-certified paper that uses post-consumer waste content. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international certification and labelling system for products that come from responsibly-managed forests and verified recycled sources. Under FSC certification, forests are certified against a set of strict environmental and social standards, and fibre from certified forests is tracked through the chain of custody certification system all the way to the consumer. By using products with the FSC certification, growth of responsible worldwide forest management is being supported. What are the benefits of making these choices? In the case of this issue of *Open* magazine:

- 61 trees saved — which is equivalent to .24 acres of forest
- 75,800 litres of water saved — which is equivalent to the contents of 49 hot tubs
- 54 mmbtu of energy saved — which is the equivalent of what 11 windmills operating for one year would produce
- 10 cubic yards of solid waste reduced — which is equivalent to the contents of .49 dump trucks
- 3.6 tonnes of greenhouse gas reduced — which is the equivalent to the output of .76 cars on the road for one year

**Making responsible choices is an important part of AU's commitment to the environment.** Dr. Frits Pannekoek, president of AU and a signatory of the University and College Presidents' *Climate Change Action Statement*, says: "Athabasca University has a long tradition of responsible environmental stewardship and our continued resolve to be a good global citizen." The *Climate Change Statement of Action*, which AU signed in January 2009, is all about AU's commitment to responsible solutions to the climate change challenge.



# ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY...in the news

by John O'Brien

## Virtual learning

### The Canadian Press

Learning's all in the games

February 18, 2009

"A new virtual learning centre at Athabasca University in Alberta could take lessons a long way from the conventional classroom. The distance-education school is hoping that cutting-edge video game technology can be used to sink students deep into what they're learning."



2009 MBA grads: Mary Stewart, Sami Wahba, Vrishti Singh, Mike Ritchie, Iumuyiwa Kolade.

## Track record

### National Post

Athabasca's Pioneering Program

February 24, 2009

"While there are other distance learning MBA programs available in Canada, Athabasca has the longest track record, having launched in 1994 when online communication for the masses was in its infancy."

## New observatory in the works

### Town & Country

AU Scientist Reaches for the Auroras

July 6, 2009

"What AU is doing is building a new geophysical observatory after receiving \$661,297 from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation's Leading Edge Fund.

The current observatory, built by (Dr. Martin) Connors in 2002, has run into interference — lights, that is. The new facility, expected to be completed by next summer, will allow for Connors and his colleagues to take better pictures of 'proton' auroras."

— Dr. Martin Connors, AU Professor and Canada Research Chair in Space Science, Instrumentation and Networking does wide-ranging research in several areas broadly related to space. At AU, he has developed the AUGO observatory to observe auroras and other sky phenomena visible at our latitude.



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Dr. Martin Connors



Dr. Dheeraj Sharma

## Changing expectations

### The Vancouver Province

#### Slowdown Means Opportunities for Some Industries

January 18, 2009

“Students became somewhat arrogant because they had multiple offers, they were negotiating salaries. That has to change. There are a lot of multinationals and national companies with a total hiring freeze.”

— *Dr. Dheeraj Sharma, associate professor, marketing management, is quoted in an article about the new realities for MBA students in the current job market.*

## Major research award

### Medicine Hat News

#### Doc Gets Funding for Cancer Study

April 17, 2009

“Essentially it frees me up to do more research in the region . . . I think it has a direct effect on the people living in and around Medicine Hat.”

— *Dr. Jeff Vallance, assistant professor, Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, talks about a \$1,080,000 research award from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research for his investigation into physical activity and its effects on breast cancer patients in rural areas.*



Dr. Jeff Vallance

## Learner focused

### Calgary Sun

#### Alberta Dialed in to Pursuing Remote Learning Opportunities

February 20, 2009

“Beyond delivering content, we look at using all of the information these mobile devices contain to personalize and adapt the learning content for the student.”

— *Dr. Kinshuk, professor, School for Computing and Information Systems, is quoted at a media conference announcing his appointment as iCORE/Xerox/Markin industrial research chair in adaptivity and personalization in informatics.*



Dr. Kinshuk



# WHL stars team up with AU to score educational goals

By John O'Brien

For many young major junior hockey league players the dream of getting a university education often has to take a back seat to their dream of one day playing in the NHL. Spending 10 days on the road at a time while trying to balance the demands of the ice with those of the classroom are barriers that many can't overcome

**Until now, that is.**



Illustration: Christopher Hunt®



A new agreement between Athabasca University and the Western Hockey League is finally putting that dream of a post-secondary education within reach. The agreement makes AU courses and programs available to players in all 22 WHL teams, starting this season.

“The WHL and Member Clubs are fully committed to ensuring all of our players have access to post-secondary courses while playing in the WHL,” said WHL Commissioner Ron Robison, “Our new agreement will provide WHL players with improved access to fully accredited university courses delivered online through Athabasca university. This new mobile education initiative will allow us to remove any obstacle for players who wish to take university courses while playing in the WHL. The WHL has a long history of commitment to players’ education”.

Since 1993, the league has provided a full scholarship, including tuition, books and fees, for one full year for every year a player spends in the WHL. It’s an expensive proposition, worth more than \$9 million since its inception, but it’s one that has been embraced by the players. Since 1993, more than 2300 of them have received scholarships from the league, making the WHL the leading provider of academic scholarships in western Canada.

“For someone who is as busy as me, it’s a key to my educational success to have access to an online university,” says Matthew Strong, a WHL defenceman who started taking first-year courses at AU before there was a formal agreement between the league and the university.

“As a professional hockey player, I do not have the option to attend set classes at any given university. Athabasca University has allowed me to keep my educational options open should I ever need a fall back due to an injury in hockey.”

It’s a partnership that delights Jim Donlevy, the WHL’s education services director. Donlevy is no stranger to education himself, having spent time as an associate professor at the University of Alberta and as the head coach of the university’s Golden Bears football team. He knows first-hand the educational hurdles young players face.

“Their first commitment, of course, is to hockey,” he says. “That’s the way it should be; it’s the goal they’ve set for themselves. But we want them to also stay focused on the education option. We want them to grow as a whole person, not just as a hockey player. It’s a philosophy for the WHL.”

“Their first commitment, of course, is to hockey . . . but we want them to also stay focused on the education option. We want them to grow as a whole person, not just as a hockey player. It’s a philosophy for the WHL.”

“Dedication and self-motivation are keys to success at Athabasca U. Not only must you teach yourself for the most part, but you must also be able to set times and dates to make sure you get your work done.”



Matt Strong

Donlevy points to Thomas Hickey as the poster child for education in professional hockey. "He's a student as well as a hockey player," says Donlevy. "Thomas is the kind of image we're trying to sell right across the league."

Hickey is a former WHL player and captain of Canada's gold medal winning world junior hockey championship team. He studied business administration at AU while pursuing his hockey career and was drafted number four overall by the L.A. Kings in 2007.

Donlevy often uses Hickey as an example of a player who can keep hockey and education in balance - important in a league that for the past 40 years has been the leading supplier to the NHL, including five first-round draft picks in the 2009 entry draft. Last season, 182 WHL alumni skated with NHL teams.

For Athabasca University, the partnership with the WHL is a natural fit. The university prides itself in removing barriers to post-secondary education, barriers like those faced by players in the Western Hockey League. The university allows students to study at their own pace, from wherever they happen to find themselves. Ideal, really, for young hockey players who find themselves on the road as often as they are at home.

"Travel is probably the biggest barrier they face," says Lori van Rooijen, vice president of Advancement at AU. "Traditional universities and colleges have fixed classrooms and fixed schedules. It's often extremely difficult for professors to adapt to a player's schedule. We don't have that problem here."

Van Rooijen says the deal with the WHL is a model for other long-term partnerships the university is pursuing in the community.

"It's an example of a perfect alignment, really," she says. "The WHL faced a number of barriers to its core goal of developing a post-secondary option for their players, and our core goal is to remove those barriers. We broke down the accessibility problem with our flexibility."

"AU has been a flexible, patient school and has the interests of our players in mind," says Steve Fera, education advisor for the Vancouver Giants. "We needed a school that understands athletes of this age and the pressures that they are under. Many of our players want to move on academically and up to now have not found a school to suit their needs - AU has stepped in and filled that void."



The university allows students to study at their own pace, from wherever they happen to find themselves. Ideal, really, for young hockey players who find themselves on the road as often as they are at home.

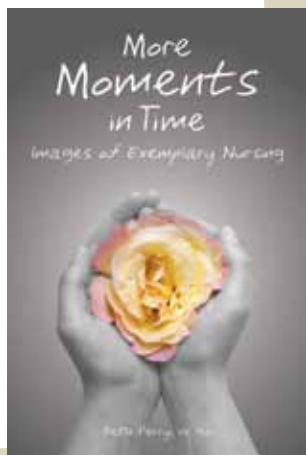
Illustration: Christopher Hunt®

# OPEN BOOK

from AU Press

by Erna Dominey

**AU** Press is pleased to announce its new books. These titles and more are available in Canada through UBC Press at [info@ubcpres.ca](mailto:info@ubcpres.ca), in the United States through the University of Washington Press at [www.washington.edu/uwpress](http://www.washington.edu/uwpress) and in Europe, the Middle East and Africa through Eurospan at [eurospan@turpin-distribution.com](mailto:eurospan@turpin-distribution.com).

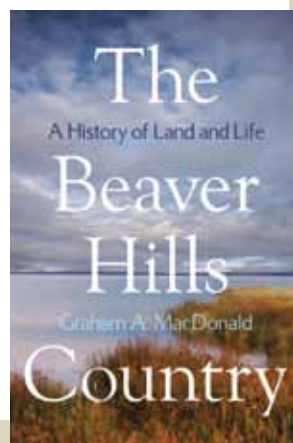


## More Moments in Time: Images of Exemplary Nursing

Beth Perry, RN, PhD

978-1-897425-51-0 - \$29.95 pb.

Perry weaves the stories of extraordinary nurses with her own ward memories and poetry to create moving and inspiring images of nursing and its rewards.



## The Beaver Hills Country: A History of Land and Life

Graham A. MacDonald

978-1-897425-37-4 - \$29.95 pb.

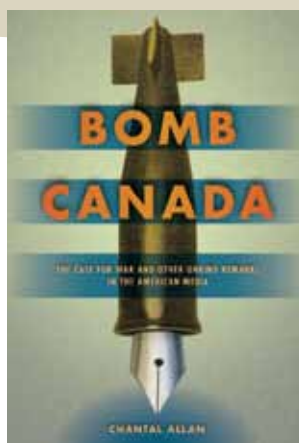
Weather, water and wildlife have shaped this unusual region of Alberta between the North Saskatchewan and Battle rivers, creating possibilities and challenges for the people who have called it their home.

## Mobile Learning: Transforming the Delivery of Education and Training

Edited by Mohamed Ally

978-1-897425-43-5 - \$39.95 pb.

This collection is for anyone interested in the use of mobile technology for various distance-learning applications. Readers will discover how to design learning materials for delivery on mobile technology — an educational way of the future.



## Bomb Canada and Other Unkind Remarks in the American Media

Chantal Allan

978-1-897425-49-7 - \$24.95 pb.

Anti-American sentiment in Canada is well documented, but what have Americans had to say about their northern neighbour? Allan examines how the American media has portrayed Canada by examining events that have tested bilateral relations.



# student stories

by Patricia Balderston

CURRENT STUDENTS



Jamie Springchief

## Journey to success

Determination has played a huge role in Jamie Springchief's life. Her studies, the result of a collaboration agreement between AU and Mount Royal College in Calgary, required Jamie to travel two hours daily for four years.

"Everyone would say I was crazy, but . . . if it wasn't for that commute I would probably be crazy! (It) gave me a lot of time to do whatever I needed to do: pray, think about school, think about life, listen to music or just be alone, all of which allowed me to remain focused and motivated."

Within a hair's breadth of completing a bachelor of arts in psychology, Springchief says she chose the program because she

was always the one to listen to and help her friends. "I love being that person. My goal is to get a masters in counselling."

She adds that as an aboriginal woman, obtaining her degree is a huge accomplishment.

"I feel much more liberated both as a woman and as a native individual. I hope to show my people and, most importantly, my children and nieces and nephew, the importance of being educated and the rewards it brings so that they too will pursue their post-secondary education. Personally, many more doors have opened for me and . . . I feel much more capable and confident moving forward in life."



Barb Rielly

## Looking for opportunities

Barb Rielly is working on a bachelor of arts in anthropology, which she began in 2004. She recently took part in an archaeological dig in Ontario to help round out her education and to enhance her employability.

"The whole dig idea came up because I knew at other universities, anthropology students had the chance to go on field schools. I decided that I was not going to feel left out and so I (did my research) and . . . ended up with two positions." She chose the program with the best amenities (hot shower, air conditioning and comfortable accommodation).

Rielly explains that she was exposed to "non-invasive archaeological techniques including research, site survey, shovel testing, cartography, reconstruction software and project planning" at the dig. The experience was "timely," she added, "in that the field of cultural resource management is a growth industry and is where most archaeologists end up working these days."

"There are opportunities out there if you go looking for them. The field school opportunity did not come calling at my door. Anyone, including a middle-aged grandmother like me, can go out and do cool things."



Daph Crane

## New frontiers in education

Daph Crane, who graduated with a master of distance education in 2000, enjoyed her AU experience so much that in 2008 she became part of a number of AU firsts. She is a member of the first class of AU's first doctoral program — the doctor of education (EdD) in distance education — which is the first of its kind in North America.

"Fortunately, AU's long-awaited program came on stream at the same time as I was seriously looking."

She is employed by Memorial University of Newfoundland as a senior instructional designer for distance education and learning technologies. The combination of her MDE background and her position at Memorial gave her the opportunity to become part of an initiative offered by the African Virtual University. As part of her participation in the AVU capacity enhancement program (ACEP), designed to train African academics in open, distance and e-learning program delivery, Daph has travelled to Africa three times in three years.

"ACEP has opened my eyes to the wider world. I had worked on international projects before but had not gone in-country. I learned about different cultures and how much different forms of distance education are depended on and contribute to the development of sub-Saharan African countries."

"AU serves a valuable role in the province and indeed the country..."

## Diversifying his portfolio

Tyler Nagel, a student since 2001, is nearing completion of his bachelor of commerce degree.

When he isn't working on AU courses, he is an instructor with the journalism program at SAIT in Calgary. He began by teaching contract courses but was hired as full-time faculty five years ago. Previously, he did consulting work with newspapers in Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

"I hadn't ever envisioned a teaching career but have found it to be a very fulfilling job. SAIT is a well-respected J-school and also has a fantastic printing and graphic arts program, which is my main area of interest."

He says AU offers students a way to take courses outside a traditional academic atmosphere but notes that it is a trade-off: there's little collegial interaction between faculty and students, unlike at a traditional university.

"That is balanced by the ability to complete accredited academic (credits) at one's own pace. I'll admit that I miss the coffee meetings with fellow students after a lecture, but the ability to move at my own pace outweighs that. AU serves a valuable role in the province and indeed the country and I am very appreciative to it for the difference it has made in my life."



Tyler Nagel

Photo: Blaise MacMullin



# Journalism in Conflict Zones course

by Patricia Balderston

AU co-pilots course with  
Department of National  
Defence – Canadian  
Manoeuvre Training Centre  
– Canadian Forces Base,  
Wainwright, AB

Student Greg Sawisky reports from the field  
in the Afghan countryside (actual location  
CFB Wainwright, AB).



**M**ilitary personnel are highly trained to react in intense situations. What about journalists — specifically war correspondents — who are also right there in the thick of the action, but whose training in a controlled classroom environment is focused on “who, what, when, where and why”? Athabasca University is helping to expand that training.

In May 2009, AU, in conjunction with the Department of National Defence, premiered Communication Studies 451: Journalism in Conflict Zones. The six-month course features a practicum of on-site field experience held at the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright.

Capt. Tom St. Denis, exercise media operations officer, says the CMTC has had a program for journalism students since it became operational in May 2006. Students were recruited from post-secondary institutions across Canada that offered journalism courses. At the time, CMTC offered work experience as opposed to any formal arrangement such as a recognized practicum or internship. In an effort to economize the recruitment process, CMTC approached Athabasca University.

St. Denis says that as an open university that spans the nation, “AU was seen as a single portal through which to recruit. AU students include many working journalists seeking to upgrade their professional knowledge and it was these more mature and experienced individuals that CMTC wanted to attract to the program.”

Dr. Evelyn Ellerman, coordinator of AU’s communication studies program, was impressed by the intent and design of the CMTC program. “The longer we discussed (it), the more I became convinced that we could develop a project course for students that would incorporate the field experience at Wainwright and provide a much-needed set of skills and knowledge for those of our students who wanted to develop a specialization in war correspondence. This field experience was a natural fit for a set of project courses that already exist within the communication studies program.”

Dr. Ellerman adds that, “The project at Wainwright allows us to ground that academic work in an under-served professional development market. There are currently no other opportunities in Canada for journalists or journalism students to acquire first-hand knowledge of the military and of working conditions in conflict zones,” she says.

Athabasca University’s long history of co-operation with the Canadian military was another deciding factor. “It seemed like a good opportunity to broaden the

relationship in an area that is critical to the success of Canadian Forces in conflict zones since the . . . military personnel (are being provided) with media relations training,” Ellerman says.

Coincidentally, AU’s program had just been made the recipient of two five-year grants: one from Corus Entertainment and the other from Vista Radio Ltd. This money allowed AU to provide travel bursaries for students to reach Edmonton from wherever they were in Canada. It also allowed AU to contract two former journalists who have worked in war zones to act as producers at CFB Wainwright’s television studio while mentoring the students in newsroom operations.

After all the talking was done, agreements were signed, course outlines finalized and the 10 students in the first cohort were on board, CMNS 451 began. It was in the nuts and bolts, involving three weeks of simulated war games in typical Afghan villages provided at CFB Wainwright, that the work for the students and their mentors got underway.

One of the mentors, Mike Vernon, could share with the students his experiences gleaned from 13 years as a journalist covering real conflict zones in Croatia and Afghanistan. He could also help them wade through military procedures and lingo, since he spent 12 years as a regular force infantry officer.

“Although students have to work with deadlines during the school year, this is much more focused and I like the analogy of a boot camp because here they are and they’ve got to produce something every day. There are deadline pressures. There’s the pressure of working with new people. There’s a pressure of learning the military culture and putting it all within the context of the war in Afghanistan and that’s a learning curve as well for them, because it’s probably not something that they had to do as part of their journalism school experience.”

Veteran CBC producer David Perlich, whose background includes time spent in Bosnia, was the other mentor guiding students through what was for them uncharted territory.

“There’s no way that you can replicate this experience in a

“It seemed like a good opportunity to broaden the relationship in an area that is critical to the success of Canadian Forces in conflict zones since the . . . military personnel (are being provided) with media relations training.”

classroom. It's the day-to-day engagement with the army, with the acronyms, with the people and with the situations. There's no way that that could possibly be replicated outside of this environment and you get to be out there in real time gathering exactly like you would," Perlich says. "We are running this like a real newsroom: same structure, same procedures, same deadlines and same expectations. We have decided to go for the most authentic experience possible in news gathering."

Despite his background, Perlich says he benefited just as much from the experience. "I learn from them (students) as they bring in new ways of thinking, new areas of writing, new ways of approaching a story and I'm learning about the army too. I'm learning how to deal with public affairs officers exactly the same way the students are, what the expectations are, what's allowable and not allowable in a military situation. It really is about being a team and working together."

A key component of the program is that the learning isn't confined to students and instructors; military personnel benefit from the experience as well.

"What CMTC does during an exercise is replicate as faithfully as possible the conditions into which the training soldiers will be deployed and a very important element of the environment in Afghanistan is the presence of media — Canadian, international and Afghan," says Capt. St. Denis.

"The soldiers will encounter these journalists in their operations, so they will also encounter them here at CMTC. And just as in Afghanistan, the soldiers will have to deal with, look after, protect Canadian reporters embedded with them and learning to do that here in training means they won't have to learn it in the mission area."

Overall, students and mentors were extremely positive about the first practicum and Ellerman says many asked if they could return. Even before the first course began, students were clamouring for a second offering, which was added in August, and even more are interested in the third, which will take place in January 2010 at a California army base.

Student Greg Sawisky says CMNS 451 was "a wonderful opportunity to put my skills to use in an exciting and challenging environment. I was able to bring my knowledge of journalism into a very practical and meaningful environment. I also had to make use of non-traditional journalism skills like diplomacy and improvisation as we had to produce stories and gather material despite language barriers and roadblocks (both figurative roadblocks and literal)."

Another participant, Tyler Nagel, calls the practicum "the adventure of a lifetime. I cancelled a two-week vacation to participate in this course — and never had a shred of regret. I'll remember this for the rest of my life. You don't know the meaning of feeling important until you're loaded into a two-rotor Chinook helicopter escorted by two Griffon gunships and flown into a combat zone."

For Nagel, there was more than just the excitement factor. "This course gave me a glimpse of the ethical dilemmas that face embedded reporters in the field. It's very easy to make friends with the hard-working soldiers and it's hard to go back to the newsroom

A key component of the program is that the learning isn't confined to students and instructors; military personnel benefit from the experience as well.



AU mentor Mike Vernon devises a plan for getting the next day's stories with students Whitney Stinson and Josh Kerr.



Student Whitney Stinson records the action at a mock-helicopter crash scene at CFB Wainwright, AB.



“We are running this like a real newsroom: same structure, same procedures, same deadlines and same expectations.”

Student Stephanie Wilkins reports from outside an Afghan village (actual location CFB Wainwright, AB).

and create stories that could cast those people in a negative light. Overall, this course is excellent preparation for any aspiring journalist whether they want to do war or domestic reporting.”

In addition to positive comments by the AU participants, military personnel commented they had noticed a “quantum” improvement in the quality of the interviews and broadcasts produced by the AU cohort.

Capt. St. Denis says they had two goals when they began the program. The first was to “accustom the soldiers training at CMTC to the presence and the consequences of having journalists with them, because the presence of media is a fact of life wherever the soldiers go.”

The second goal was to introduce the army and the soldiers in it, to young journalists “in the hope that they would see beyond stereotypes and begin to think of the military as a legitimate field for serious journalistic endeavour. It was our opinion that for far too long the military (particularly the army) was all but invisible to Canadians except when there was a scandal, criminal incident or major environmental disaster. And even then, it was painfully obvious that, with virtually no knowledge or experience of the army, Canadian journalists could provide only the most basic and elementary coverage.

“Our program will not make defence specialists out of our journalists, but it will give them just a little bit more knowledge and experience to bring to their reporting if and when they have to cover a military story.”



# meet the teacher

by Diane Morrison — Dr. Kinshuk, Dr. Palakkamanil

by Cathy Nickel — Dr. Locky

## Dr. Kinshuk Engineering a better education

Dr. Kinshuk's research is about systems adaptivity and personalization in mobile learning, which in language the rest of us will understand means creating a better, more authentic learning experience for students without increasing instructor workload.

"I'm not interested in research for the sake of research," said the director of the School of Computing and Information Systems at AU and the iCORE/Xerox/Markin industry research chair. Kinshuk is also the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Educational Technology and Society and founding chair of the Institution of Electrical and Electronics Engineers' technical committee on learning technologies.

"This work is about using the technology in intelligent ways to identify the individual characteristics of student requirements and provide feedback directly to students. It's about giving students a better learning experience."

As the student works at a computer or mobile device such as a PDA or cell phone, the system can automatically

gather information about the learner, such as learning speed, short-term memory, recall, current knowledge, whether they prefer verbal or visual presentation, whether they are reflective thinkers or active, what time of the day they tend to work on their studies and so on. Then the system combines the learner profile with factors related to a student's location, device and situational context and customizes the content and presentation of the lesson or the website to provide him or her with a personalized learning experience.

When doing his Ph.D. in the 1990s, Kinshuk was working in the area of intelligent tutor systems — technology that was expected to replace teachers. "That didn't happen because you cannot replace the human interactive experience with a machine. So intelligent tutor systems evolved into adaptive learning systems."

The adaptivity and personalization research has two aims: to broaden access to learning for students in remote and northern areas and to create authentic learning that combines real-life objects in the individual's environment with virtual learning content.

To do that, a number of factors are assessed: the learner profile (including background, learning styles, behaviours and preferences), the learner's location, the specific situation, including what real life objects are available and who else is there that will contribute to the learning process, and, finally, the device profile, which includes information about the device (whether desktop, laptop, PDA or cell phone) being used. Then the content, the presentation and the activities can be customized accordingly for each specific learner.

And this is done without creating more work for instructors, Kinshuk said, by using the content they already have.

"The system can provide the instructor with overall information about the students so they can better design lessons according to the preferences and choices of the various types of students. The system is then able to provide more quizzes for one, more hands-on examples for another, and more discussions and group work for someone else."

Kinshuk's interest in computer technology began to develop in the late '80s at the end of his first year of undergraduate studies in mechanical engineering in India. "That first summer I went over to the computer lab and asked for access to a computer. They gave me three chapters to read and said to come back next week. When I showed up the next day, they saw I was seriously interested."

"I think both students and faculty bring a lot more to the research team in a distributed environment than they do . . . face-to-face. People living and working in different geographical locations have very different experiences and the research benefits from that diversity. Most of our students are working and have very strong practical experience in the area of research. Many more minds can be brought together on a project via the Internet. And when we are all over the world, the work continues 24 hours a day."

His short-term goal is to create a better learning experience, with people accessing whatever learning tools are in their environment — what he refers to as "just in time, on demand learning."

His long-term goal is somewhat difficult to imagine. "The ultimate aim — and this might not happen in my lifetime — is an environment in which learning happens so automatically, in such small amounts, that you don't even notice. The environment will be so intuitive that every action contributes to learning. People will get exactly what they need, right at that moment and it will happen in such a natural way that people will say 'So what?' No explicit action is needed; it just happens here and now."

The applications and the benefits may boggle some minds. But not Kinshuk's. In his world, system technology is definitely our friend.



Photo: Ed Ellis

Dr. Kinshuk

"I'm not interested in research for the sake of research."

## Dr. David Locky

### ARBRI director looks to future of river basin

Dr. David Locky didn't know it at the time, but every step he took in his personal, academic and professional life led him to a position that's almost tailor made for him: director of the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute (ARBRI) at Athabasca University.

Hours spent outdoors on his grandfather's hobby farm, his undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate degrees, work experience as an environmental consultant — even pursuing his post-secondary studies as a mature student — came together when he took on his current position in May 2008. Locky has no doubt about the important role ARBRI will play in the future of a region vitally important to northern Alberta's environmental and economic future.

"The Athabasca River Basin is probably one of the most important in North America from the perspective of the industrial activity taking place in a very unique environmental system," he explained. The second largest oil deposits in the world are here. At more than 1500 kms, the Athabasca is the province's longest undammed river. Born at the Athabasca Glacier in Jasper National Park, the river has four times the flow of the North Saskatchewan River. The delta where the Athabasca meets the Peace River and flows into Lake Athabasca is a world-class wetland. Wood Buffalo National Park, located within the basin, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. More than 150,000 farmers, fishermen and Aboriginal peoples, as well as oil, gas, mining, forestry and tourism companies and the provincial and federal governments, are economically tied to the basin.

On top of these natural assets, the basin has played an intrinsic role in the lives of northern Alberta people. "The river has an incredible history with First Nations, Métis, fur traders, the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Companies, and as a gateway for development when European immigrants came west," he added. "People have shaped the river in some way for thousands of years. Now we're the next ones to do it."

"We all drive cars and live in houses made of wood that we heat with natural gas and run with electricity. These products come from somewhere and there are social costs. Development is going to happen in some way, shape or form in the basin. If we can't avoid the impact on the land and water, how can we mitigate it? If we can't mitigate it, how can we restore or recreate

"If we can use the best science to avoid serious impacts to the land, water, air, biodiversity and human population, then ARBRI will be making an important contribution."

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

the environment? If we can use the best science to avoid serious impacts to the land, water, air, biodiversity and human population, then ARBRI will be making an important contribution."

Since *National Geographic* featured a story on the oilsands, international attention has been focused sharply on the basin. "People are watching to see what we're doing. This has further elevated the importance of the work we do at ARBRI. Through research and by making knowledge available to everyone who needs it, we'll help people make wise decisions."

Central to that success will be ARBRI's interdisciplinary approach, which is intended to bring together diverse perspectives to develop a comprehensive view of the social, cultural, physical and economic factors affecting the basin and its possible future development.

It is hoped that stakeholders including First Nations groups, industry, educational institutions, towns and counties, non-governmental agencies and environmental groups all will be part of the discussion. Locky's early focus to date has been on exploring the basin's different communities, deepening his understanding of their relationship with the river.

"The Institute will provide an unbiased, neutral space for dialogue and joint problem-solving among all the stakeholders," Locky said, noting that the University's "third-party neutrality" is important for eliminating any perceived agendas. "Our desire and our mandate is to engage and

empower communities with a bottom-up approach to identifying and establishing research priorities. We begin by connecting with communities to find out what is important to them. Research priorities are identified and added to those generated by scientists and scholars. From this, we will develop the Institute's research 'palette'."

ARBRI has already received a major vote of confidence from a significant industrial player in the region: the Imperial Oil Foundation is donating \$200,000 over the next four years to help establish an online bibliography that will give stakeholders and others access to the large volume of research that has been done on the basin to date. This is an important first step in fostering understanding about the basin and in identifying future research opportunities and Locky fully intends to build on this early momentum.

It is momentum that, not surprisingly, is generated in part by Athabasca University itself. That AU has created this innovative research centre with a province-wide perspective — and that it is taking the lead in helping to shape the basin's future — is no accident. "Geographically, we're located in the heart of the basin and we're very well known," Locky explained. "Our unique academic expertise and the long-established relationships we have with basin stakeholders, including First Nations groups, industry and government, makes this a logical fit for us. This is our home and no-one better positioned to undertake a project like this."



## Thomas Palakkamanil

### AU program director fosters community wherever he goes

Throughout all of Thomas Palakkamanil's adult life, he has been driven by a desire to help people. From a family of physicians, he explains: "I wanted to do something for other people. That's in my blood."

Palakkamanil's work in the health care field has benefited communities in northern Africa, India, the Northwest Territories and Edmonton. Then there are the thousands of students around the world who have graduated from the health administration programs at AU, of which Palakkamanil is the director.

"I have been wanting to send a thank you to you for your encouragement during the health admin. courses," wrote one student. "I wanted to tell you that this program has really helped me in many ways ... most of all I wanted to thank you for everything. Whenever you have a day of not feeling appreciated, know that there are people like me out there who really do!"

That kind of sentiment is not unusual. Palakkamanil is as devoted to his students as they are to him. "When I came to Canada as a graduate student, I did not have anyone to talk to. I don't want my students to go through that. I don't want anyone dropping out because they have no one to talk to. I'm the director of the program. Who else can they go to? I know the courses. I know the difficulties. Students open up to me and I support them."

After graduating from Kerala University with a B.Sc. in physics and chemistry, Palakkamanil went on to earn a master's degree in public health education, also in India. He then came to Canada, but shortly after was off to Nigeria for two years where he worked with CUSO to supervise a health education training program. In the late '70s, teaching methods were challenging, he said. With no labs or equipment to teach experiments, they had to improvise.

He returned to Canada to begin graduate work in health administration at the University of Ottawa, later transferring to the University of Alberta where he specialized in primary health care and

"Helping people, being of service, gives me peace of mind."

community development. To support his studies, he began working full-time with mentally handicapped adults at the Good Samaritan Society in Edmonton."

After graduating in 1983, he traded the +45 C weather of northern Africa for the -45 C weather of Northern Canada and joined the Medical Services Branch of Health Canada where his work as the director of health and social services programs took him to the Arctic, working with 26 Dene communities. Over this time, he further developed his understanding of community issues and working in rural communities.

As that process evolved, it became clear that training was needed to enable Aboriginal Peoples to assume primary health care positions in their own communities. Because few people in many of these remote communities had completed Grade 12, a different kind of training program was needed. In 1988, the federal government contracted Athabasca University, which in turn hired Palakkamanil, to develop a one-of-a-kind, two-year university certificate in health development administration. "We took a very holistic approach. Human health and community development are closely related. Housing, nutrition, sanitation and economy all need to be part of it."

When the federal government discontinued the program for aboriginal students, AU continued to offer it by distance and expanded it to a three-year, 90-credit bachelor of health administration. "It remains the only undergraduate health administration degree in Canada offered by distance. AU was also the first university to give credit to people with two year diplomas in any health care field, opening up avenues for them to advance their careers."

It is a very strong program, Palakkamanil said, having been developed by subject matter experts who teach in the graduate program at the University of Alberta's School of Public Health. The undergraduate program keeps up with current issues by continually adding courses such as risk management and infection control. AU is



Dr. Thomas Palakkamanil

"When I came to Canada as a graduate student, I did not have anyone to talk to. I don't want my students to go through that. I don't want anyone dropping out because they have no one to talk to."

in the process of developing a graduate diploma in health administration, to be offered this fall.

Palakkamanil sits on various provincial, national, First Nations and international organizations as an expert on community-based program planning. Currently he is on the board of the Seva Rural Development Society (SRDS) in India. While on sabbatical last year, he worked with the World Health Organization, helping communities in Thailand to take more responsibility for their own health care.

After the interview, he was off to meet with a student to help arrange an introduction with SRDS for her final project in international health. "Helping people, being of service, gives me peace of mind." Notwithstanding the peace of mind of Palakkamanil's students.

# AU names three newest honorary doctorates

by Diane Morrison

All three of the 2009 honorary degree recipients share a passion for ethics, peace and freedom, and a desire to make a better world.

## Honouring a leader

by Diane Morrison and Patricia Balderston

An honorary Doctor of Letters was conferred on Ovide William Mercredi in recognition of his outstanding contribution to public service and lifetime commitment to the peaceful preservation and celebration of indigenous peoples' rights.

Mercredi is a distinguished lawyer, negotiator, indigenous rights advocate and peace activist. His notion of egalitarianism and fairness, as well as his sense of community obligation, led him to the position of regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). In 1991, he began two terms as the national chief of the AFN. During this time, he demonstrated a commitment to peaceful resolution of differences and worked to promote traditional indigenous teachings. He also played a major role in the Charlottetown Accord constitutional discussions. He is currently serving as chief of the Misipawistik (Grand Rapids) First Nation and is chancellor of the University College of the North.

Leadership in many forms is a concept with which Mercredi is familiar. While he devotes himself to being a community leader, he pointed out that outside forces make his job difficult. "The economic condition of the reserves requires more than peace and harmony to address," he says. "Unless we have receptive federal and provincial governments — and because of our dependence on them — we are limited in our ability to respond."



Dr. Ovide Mercredi





AU President Dr. Frits Pannekoek and Governing Council Chair Joy Romero presenting Dr. Ovide Mercredi with AU's honorary Doctor of Letters.

"It's a good idea to talk about how we could collaborate in the North to benefit all."

While there have been advances in the number of teachers, social workers, doctors and lawyers in the aboriginal community, Mercredi believes: "It's too early to see if we are able to develop an upper and middle class in our communities, rather than only a lower class." He says that overall employment opportunities are still required. Governments or mining and oil companies show interest when they want to extract natural resources, but the employment opportunities accompanying such development are not sufficiently extended to the aboriginal workforce.

In addition to employment, education is central to the advancement of the growing aboriginal population. That is why he uses his role as chancellor of the

University College of the North to advocate that remote communities have the resources they require. "A lot of education can take place in regional centres," he said. Although there is currently no arrangement between Athabasca University and UCN, Mercredi says: "It's a good idea to talk about how we could collaborate in the North to benefit all."

While education is a necessity, Mercredi also points out that good physical and mental health is crucial. The continued growth of the aboriginal population, combined with a lack of resources and a decline of traditional foods such as moose, fish, rabbit and caribou, have resulted in an increased dependence on food purchased from stores or fast food outlets. The result, according to Mercredi, is that people are not maintaining their health, which in turn affects every area of their lives.

Despite the many challenges, he remains hopeful about what can be accomplished for his community. "We are all thinking toward doing something positive," Mercredi said.

## Setting a standard

Jean Linse Pettifor was presented with an honorary doctor of laws in recognition of her lifelong commitment to breaking down barriers to education, her mentoring of those around her, her scholarship and her leadership in professional ethics.

Pettifor, currently a registered psychologist, is an adjunct professor of psychology at the University of Calgary and is involved with the psychology programs at AU. She has had a long and illustrious career contributing to the practice of psychology provincially, nationally and internationally for 60 years. She sees her work in establishing codes and guidelines for value-based ethical decision making as an important accomplishment. Pettifor, born in 1922, notes also that "Still being alive and kicking and dedicated to good is a major achievement."

Issues of equality, justice, worth and respect have been of primary concern to Pettifor for a long time. "Unless you are very shallow, materialistic, or depressed, you will be concerned about the well-being

of people not only in your own life but also of the larger society. There is a need to contribute to the removal of those aspects of society that are detrimental to the well-being of its citizens."

The poverty and racism Pettifor's mother experienced as a child after immigrating from Denmark in 1911 would affect both women, broadening their perspectives about the importance of peace, education, health and justice.

Her mother wanted all four of her children to have a post-secondary education and opened a boarding house to help pay for it.



Well wishers Veronica Horn, Sandra Collins and Judi Malone join Pettifor (second from left) to celebrate her being presented an honorary Doctor of Laws.

"Mother was determined that all children, both the boy and the girls, would get an education, because she thought that educated people . . . would take better care of people in society."

Because there was a shortage of teachers in Alberta during the Second World War, Pettifor was able to take accelerated teacher training and then earn the income to continue her education. Between teaching high school for two years, attending university and taking correspondence courses, she completed a bachelor of arts

“There is a need to contribute to the removal of those aspects of society that are detrimental to the well-being of its citizens.”



Dr. Jean Linse Pettifor

and bachelor of education as well as earned a master of arts in English and a master of education in psychology.

She was a founding member of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta and discovered that this organizational structure was effective for her work advocating for others. “My personal focus was much broader than mental health. Psychology covered a tremendous scope of what is healthy for people. Through the PAA, I had a structure or umbrella for what I was doing to promote professional ethics and standards.”

Pettifor is a long-term member of the Committee on Ethics of the Canadian Psychological Association and was a major contributor to the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, first adopted in 1986, which has served as a model for similar codes for psychological associations in New Zealand, Mexico and Europe, as well

as for music therapists, school psychologists and rehabilitation professionals. She was associated in an advisory capacity with the creation of the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists, which was adopted in 2008 by the International Union of Psychological Science and the International Association of Applied Psychology. She continues to be involved in making presentations on its use and application.

Pettifor has served as president of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta, the College of Alberta Psychologists, and the Canadian Psychological Association. She received the latter organization's Gold Medal Award for Distinguished Lifetime Contributions to Canadian Psychology in 2003. She was awarded a Canadian Centennial Medal in 1967 and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal in 2002.



Dr. Neil Reimer

## A labour of love

Neil Reimer was presented with an honorary doctor of laws in recognition of the outstanding contribution he has made to the lives of working people worldwide. Reimer's efforts in the co-operative movement as a trade union organizer and official, politician and social activist have resulted in better representation and working conditions for Alberta workers and improved social policies for Alberta workers and seniors. Reimer also advocates strongly for making post-secondary education more accessible to working people.

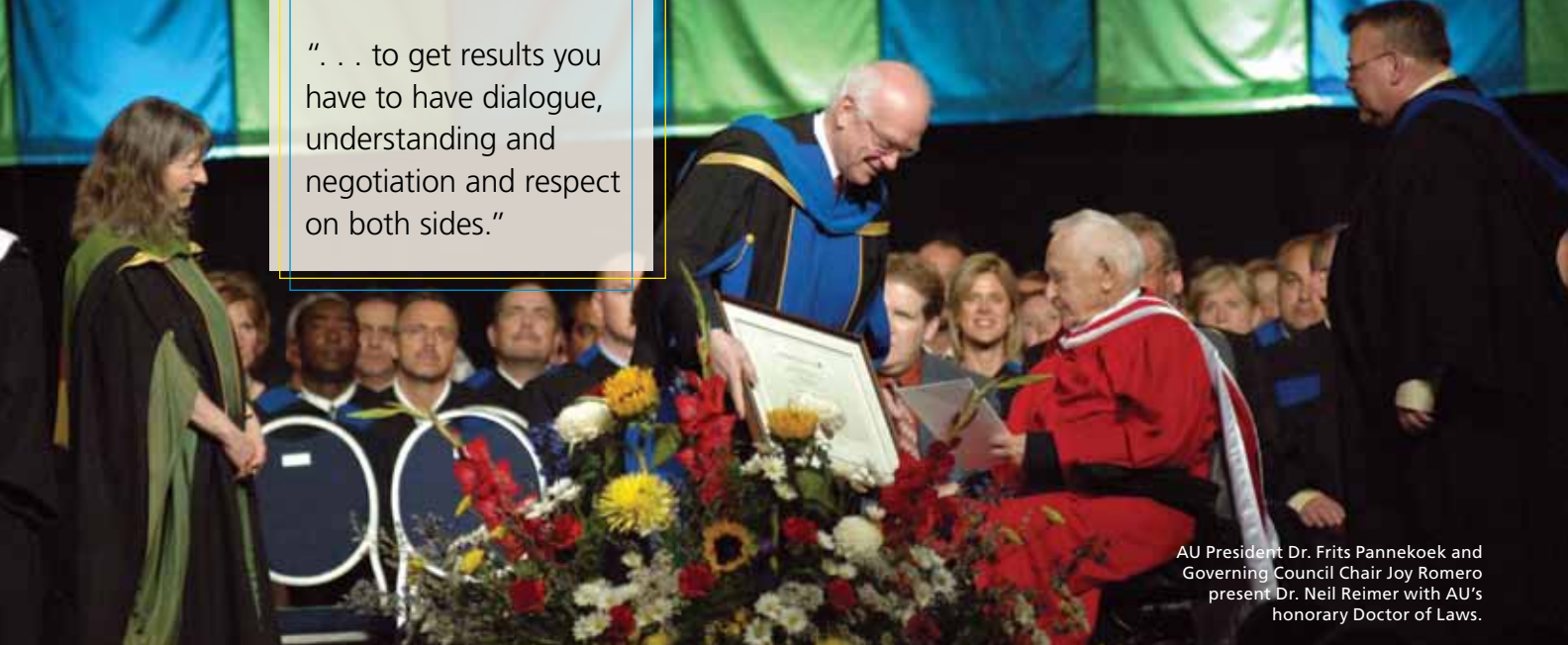
Campaigning for the rights of working people has been a life-long occupation for Reimer. In 1942, with Regina's Consumers' Co-operative Refinery, the 21-year-old Reimer organized unionization drives in refineries, on oil rigs and in chemical plants and called for greater union involvement in safety education and enforcement.

His efforts to create more autonomy for Canadian organized workers led to the creation of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union (ECWU), which in 1992 became part of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada. He led the ECWU until his retirement in 1984.

Interested in lobbying governments for policies more sympathetic to workers and the union movement, Reimer became vice-president of the Canadian Congress of Labour in 1955 and was elected to the executive of the



“. . . to get results you have to have dialogue, understanding and negotiation and respect on both sides.”



AU President Dr. Frits Pannekoek and Governing Council Chair Joy Romero present Dr. Neil Reimer with AU's honorary Doctor of Laws.

newly formed Canadian Labour Congress the following year, continuing to serve until 1974.

He saw politics as a way to advance the labour movement. “I saw so many things happen that could have been resolved much more easily through political channels. The co-operative approach is the better approach. I’m not saying to surrender. You have to stand up for what you want. In order to get results you have to have dialogue, understanding and negotiation, and respect on both sides.”

He was the first provincial leader of the Alberta New Democratic Party and from 1963 to 1968 he worked to improve political accountability. Leading a left-wing party in Alberta was not easy; according to Reimer, “It was pretty tough, particularly in the days of Ernest Manning. He pulled out the communist red speech at the first opportunity he had. All the

parties did. During one meeting in the 1963 election, we had the Liberals chanting ‘Communists, Communists’ at the back of the room. It was a strange accusation to me. I was born in the Soviet Union and my family left because they didn’t think the country was good for us anymore.”

In the co-operative movement, Reimer was treasurer of a local credit union in Saskatchewan and played an important role in financing various co-operative ventures, including local stores and funeral homes, which cut the costs of a funeral by 50 per cent.

“Saskatchewan was in real turmoil at the time,” recalls Reimer. “They were deciding what kind of society they wanted to build after private enterprise had let them down. Co-operatives were a big movement. There was a co-operative power company, factories, the telephone system, and it all went very well.”

Though retired from both industry and union involvement, Reimer is still active in the community. He currently works to improve the lives of seniors in Alberta and is secretary emeritus of the Alberta Council on Aging. His lifetime of service was recognized by the federal government in 1988 when he was named to the Order of Canada, and Reimer has received numerous other awards, medals and citations.

He is also currently involved with the Alberta Labour History Institute, an organization of trade unionists, academics and others interested in researching and disseminating the history of working people in Alberta. “Labour unions can be thanked for achieving many things for workers but nobody knows about it. The labour movement deserves recognition for what it has accomplished. Unions and unionists ought to be recognized for the good work they do, just as in any other field.”

## Honorary doctorates 1979 - 2008

1979 Fernand Grenier	1987 Maxwell William Ward	1993 Ian Tyson	2003 Robert Stollery
1979 The Lord Perry of Walton	1987 Madeleine Parent	1994 Anthony Lindday Austin Fields	2003 Vicki Gabereau
1980 Dr. T.C. (Tim) Byrne	1988 Dr. Bernard Trueman Keeler	1994 Dr. Ernest J. Wiggins	2004 Dr. Tony Bates
1981 Anastasios Christodoulou	1988 The Royal Canadian Air Farce	1995 Maureen Anne McTeer	2004 Pamela D. Wallin
1982 Pierre Burton	1989 Dr. Myer Horowitz	1995 Eric Newell	2005 Gwendolyn Hooks
1982 Bakhshish Singh	1989 William Patrick Kelly	1996 Moses Znaimer	2005 Frank Pierpoint Appleby
1983 Dorothy Livesay	1990 Dr. Josephine M. Brown	1997 Linda Hughes	2006 Marie Smallface-Marule
1984 Dr. W.A. Samuel Smith	1990 Brian Paisley	1998 Sir John S. Daniel	2006 Dr. Marc Garneau
1985 Dr. Northrop Frye	1990 Anne Wheeler	1999 Gajaraj Dhanarajan	2006 Peter Homulos
1985 The Honorable Ernest C. Manning	1991 The Honourable Marjorie M. Bowker	2000 Stephen John Murgatroyd	2007 Professor Mandla Makhanya
1985 Clarence “Big” Miller	1991 Ted Harrison	2000 Eleanor Wachtel	2007 Johnsen Sewepagaham
1985 Lois Hole	1992 Michael J. Miller	2001 Holger Petersen	2007 Albert Karvonen
1986 Larry Denman Clarke	1992 David W. Schindler	2001 Maria Campbell	2008 Patricia Anne Monture
1986 Chief Walter Patrick Twinn	1993 Helen Mary Sabin	2002 James Shapiro	2008 Janice Morse
		2002 Joseph Schwarcz	2008 Mary Lou Jepsen

# honours and awards

by Diane Morrison

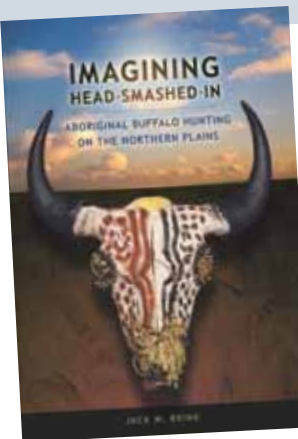
## First of its kind for AU

Dr. Jeff Vallance, assistant professor at the Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, was awarded a seven-year, \$1,080,000 Independent Investigator Award from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. It's the first award from AHFMR to an Athabasca University researcher since the foundation was established in 1980. Vallance is studying the effects of physical activity on the health outcomes of breast cancer patients who are undergoing chemotherapy. This research project also received \$188,000 over three years in Canadian Institutes of Health Research funding.



Photo: Ed Ellis

Dr. Jeff Vallance



## AU Press Makes an Impression

AU Press caused a significant buzz at the May 2009 Book Publishers Association of Alberta's gala by taking home the Trade Non-fiction Award for *Imagining Head-Smashed-In: Aboriginal Buffalo Hunting on the Northern Plains*, by Jack Brink. That evening, AU Press also shared the Scholarly and Academic Book Award with

the University of Alberta Press for *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* by Sarah Carter.

AU Press is the first scholarly press to be established by a Canadian university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is dedicated to disseminating knowledge through open-access digital books and journals.

## Learning Communities

Rural Alberta's Development Fund awarded funding up to \$3.1 million to Athabasca University's Learning Communities Project to provide educational opportunities for people living in rural and aboriginal communities in northern Alberta. The Learning Communities Project is a partnership between Athabasca University, the Athabasca Tribal Council, the Bigstone Cree Nation, the Métis Settlements General Council and the North Peace Tribal Council. Over the next two years, the project will create a system of student supports, community-based educational databases and access to e-learning opportunities. The project's goal is to provide educational services that respond to local needs and interests and to build upon students' existing educational preparation and professional or life experience.

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

## Building Knowledge Networks

Dr. Kam Jugdev, an associate professor of project management and strategy in the Centre for Innovative Management, has been awarded \$68,986 for *Building Knowledge Networks: Factors Impacting Project Assessments*. When knowledge associated with past projects is lost, past mistakes tend to be repeated. Understanding how learning takes place, along with what is learned and how the knowledge is shared, can help improve project performance. This study will help increase collective understanding of how project assessments and communities of practice lead to the creation of organization-wide knowledge networks. This is Jugdev's second SSHRC grant.



Dr. Kam Jugdev

## Canada Research Chair

Dr. Dragan Gasevic, assistant professor in the School of Computing and Information Systems, has been awarded the Canada Research Chair in Semantic Technologies. The position is funded at \$100,000 per year for five years with the possibility of one renewal. Gasevic also received a three-year, \$300,000 Alberta Ingenuity New Faculty Award, which provides start-up support to independent investigators who are in their first academic career appointment at an Alberta university.





Dr. Dianne Conrad

## Prior Learning Assessment

Dr. Dianne Conrad, director of the Centre for Learning Accreditation, received \$39,571 for her work in *Relationship of Knowledge-Building to the Use of Prior Learning Assessment within Undergraduate Degree Programs*, a comparative study of two prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) systems currently in use in Canada and New Zealand. The goal of the research, which uses a cumulative case study approach, is to determine the relationship of each system to the knowledge-building function that is critical to the success of post-secondary graduates, both within their programs and in subsequent employment. The comparative element of the study will serve to identify and distinguish the strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages of each system for learners, institutions and the workplace – the ultimate end user of each system. This is Conrad's second SSHRC award.

## Best Journal Article

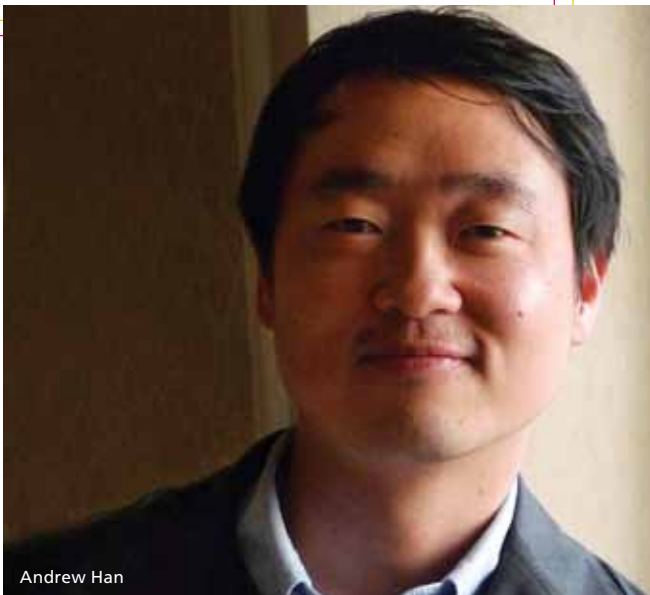
Director of the Centre for Learning Accreditation, Dr. Dianne Conrad, received a Journal Award from the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education for her article *Revisiting the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): A Reflective Inquiry into RPL Practice in Canada*, which appeared in the *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education*. In choosing Conrad's article, a jury of reviewers commented: "Conrad's writing epitomizes the thoughtfulness and integration of knowledge that we look for in a reflective piece. She manages to be both creative and analytical about a topic of high relevance to university continuing education."

## Compassion Fatigue

Dr. Beth Perry received a research award from the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology. This award carries significant recognition in the oncology nursing world. The project, *An Exploration of Factors that May Trigger or Exacerbate the Experience of Compassion Fatigue in Clinical Oncology Nurses*, is a descriptive study focusing on increasing understanding of the experience of compassion fatigue in clinical oncology nurses, specifically registered nurses.

## Outstanding Mentor Award

Regner Sabillon, an individualized study tutor in the School of Computing and Information Systems, received the 2009 Outstanding Mentor Award in the Network Professional Association Awards for Professionalism. The award honours the networking professional who has most effectively met the combined ideals of professionalism and mentoring.



Andrew Han

## National Dissertation Award

Andrew Han, a learning designer in AU's Centre for Language and Literature, received the Canadian Association of University Teachers of German Dissertation Prize for his work *Deification and Invective in Heinrich Heine's Satirical Prose*. This prize is awarded triennially for the best PhD dissertation written and defended in a German studies program in Canada during the previous three years.

## Wedemeyer Award

Dr. Terry Anderson, professor in AU's Centre for Distance Education and Canada Research Chair in Distance Education, was awarded the Charles A. Wedemeyer Award by the University Continuing Education Association for his open-access book *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*, which was published last year by AU Press. The award is one of two annual publication awards given by the association to recognize publications of merit that make significant contributions to research in the field of distance education.

## SSHRC Grants

Three AU researchers have been awarded grants through the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada's standard research grants program. All three grants were awarded over a three-year period.

## Head-Smashed-In a Smash Hit

AU Press author Jack Brink won the prestigious 2009 City of Edmonton Book Prize for *Imagining Head-Smashed-In: Aboriginal Buffalo Hunting on the Northern Plains*.

Brink is the archaeology curator at the Royal Alberta Museum. His winning book, published by AU Press in 2008, chronicles the history of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, in southwestern Alberta. Aboriginal hunters used the site for nearly 6,000 years before European contact. Earlier this year, *Imagining Head-Smashed-In* was selected by the Society for American Archaeology as the best archeology book of 2009 in the popular writing category.



To watch an interview with Jack Brink go to [www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120137](http://www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120137) and click on "video"

## Knowledge Acquisition

The Fonds de Recherche Sur la Nature et les Technologies (FQRNT) has announced a \$60,000 award to Dr. Amal Zouaq, who joined Athabasca University earlier this year as a post-doctoral fellow in the School of Computing and Information Systems. Her research tackles the issue of knowledge acquisition and exploitation for computer training purposes by offering an integrated framework that enables knowledge extraction from texts and its dissemination for training purposes.

## Artistic Pedagogical Technologies

Dr. Beth Perry, an associate professor of nursing in the Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, received \$42,976 for *An Exploration of How Artistic Pedagogical Technologies Influence Interaction, Social Presence and Community in the Online Post-Secondary Classroom*. This three-year project will address questions arising from earlier research and aims to increase understanding of how artistic pedagogical technologies stimulate interaction, create social presence and help develop community in the online post-secondary classroom. Dr. Margaret Edwards, also of the Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, is the co-investigator of the project.

**President's Awards** Karen Wall, assistant professor, communication studies, with the Centre for State and Legal Studies and Martha Cleveland-Innes, associate professor, distance education, with the Centre for Distance Education, were the 2008-2009 recipients of the President's Award for Research and Scholarly Excellence (PARSE). Cleveland-Innes' book is *An Introduction to Distance Education: Understanding Teaching and Learning in a New Era*. Wall's book is *It's Not About the Puck: A Social History of Sport in Alberta*. The PARSE is given in recognition of a record of excellence in research scholarship carried out by a full-time member of the AU faculty or staff. It is given for the specific purpose of bringing a major project to completion in a way which will result in a publishable manuscript (book or monograph) at the completion of the grant period. The award consists of four months of research leave in order to facilitate the completion of the publishing project.

## Clio Award

Author Sarah Carter won a Clio Award from the Canadian Historical Association for her groundbreaking examination of marriage in early western settler societies. *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* was published by AU Press and the University of Alberta Press. Clio Awards are given annually for meritorious publications or for exceptional contributions by individuals or organizations to regional history. Carter was this year's winner for the Prairies.

## AU Geophysical Observatory

The Canada Foundation for Innovation awarded \$661,297 under its Leading Edge Fund to the Athabasca University Geophysical Observatory. The grant will be used to relocate and rebuild a new observatory near Athabasca. The Athabasca University Geophysical Observatory studies the near earth environment, particularly the aurora or northern lights and the magnetic fields associated with the aurora. The research is led by Dr. Martin Connors, Canada Research Chair in space science, instrumentation and networking, and professor with the Centre for Science. The new location will be about 30 kilometers out of town, away from light interference.



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Dr. Martin Connors



# Building for the future by Cathy Nickel

## Funds boost high-priority projects important to Athabasca University and the community

Investment from both the public and private sectors is enabling Athabasca University to move forward quickly with several critical projects that will yield long-term dividends for learners and the entire community.

Through the Government of Canada's Knowledge Infrastructure Program, AU is enhancing both its main campus in Athabasca and its information and communication technology infrastructure. Both are high-priority projects driven by the university's commitment to enhance, expand, modernize and maintain essential teaching and research facilities.

An investment of \$7.65 million is enabling AU to move forward with development of an innovative online infrastructure project: the Open Knowledge Environment. This project will greatly boost the university's ability to increase capacity and also create a new international standard in post-secondary education and knowledge acquisition research.

A further \$3.8 million is helping AU to undertake the first major expansion and refurbishment of its science labs and construction of a new front entrance for the research library, both of which will be complete in spring 2011. The labs will become a state-of-the-art research and teaching hub in rural northern Alberta and will play a pivotal

role in advancing the work of AU's Athabasca River Basin Research Institute (ARBRI), which is investigating economic and social issues in the basin.

These two major projects will also create jobs and provide an important economic stimulus to the Athabasca region, which has been particularly hard hit by the economic downturn. The upgrades will also increase energy efficiency, reduce emissions and enhance health and safety.

The Imperial Oil Foundation is propelling ARBRI forward with a \$200,000 investment over four years that will help create the digital online science bibliography. This ambitious undertaking will find, access, catalogue and digitize available research and other data about the Athabasca River Basin, creating the first centralized repository of information about the basin.

The bibliography, expected to be accessible by the end of 2009, is a key aspect of ARBRI's mission to study the basin and its people from a broad range of perspectives. The innovative interdisciplinary research centre is bringing together scientists, scholars and stakeholders to provide crucial insights into the social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of the dynamic and ever-changing basin, which is so important to all

aspects of life in the region. By providing free access to information, ARBRI will remove barriers and facilitate research.

A third project that will have a significant impact is Athabasca's Learning Communities: Indigenous Communities Project, which has received funding to a maximum of \$3.1 million from the Rural Alberta's Development Fund (RADF).

The project will help reduce barriers to learning for people in isolated communities. It aims to give small groups of learners in diverse northern aboriginal communities access to the courses they need. Through a web-based network, AU will bring together learners and partner education providers and will also help co-ordinate learner support activities linking learners from various communities with one another.

The Indigenous Communities Project is another chapter in Athabasca University's successful Learning Communities Project, which was piloted in 2007 to help reduce the barriers to post-secondary education faced by people who live and work in isolated northern Alberta communities. The first phase of the project was generously supported by a \$1.3 million donation from Mr. Allan Markin.

### Had a good day.

Picked up my bike at the repair shop. Downloaded some tunes. My credit card makes it easy, and helps build my credit history too. I can get emergency cash at ATMs, and even pay over time if I need to. Plus, my school gets a contribution for every purchase. Not bad.

### Athabasca University



**Security Protection | Online Account Management**  
For more information, call **1.877.428.6060<sup>a</sup>**  
or log on to **www.creditsvp.com**

Mention priority code **CHG9**

Call us Monday–Friday 9 a.m.–9 p.m. Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

MBNA Canada Bank is the exclusive issuer and administrator of the MBNA Platinum Plus Credit Card Program in Canada. MBNA, MBNA Canada, MBNA Canada Bank, MBNA Platinum Plus, and the MBNA logo are all trademarks of FIA Card Services, National Association, used by MBNA Canada Bank pursuant to licence. MasterCard, MasterPurchase and MasterPentent are registered trademarks of MasterCard International, Incorporated, used pursuant to licence. <sup>a</sup>By telephoning to apply for an MBNA Platinum Plus MasterCard credit card you consent to the collection, use and processing of information about yourself by MBNA, its affiliates and any of their respective agents and service providers, and to the sharing or exchange of reports and information with credit reporting agencies, affiliates and service providers in relation to processing your application and, if approved, administering and servicing your account. You also acknowledge that the account, if approved, will not be used by any third party other than a third party specifically designated by you, and then only in accordance with MBNA policies and procedures then in effect.

©2009 MBNA



Brought to you by:  
**mbna**

AD-09-08-0230

# alumni stories

by Patricia Balderston



Chandra Clarke

## Chandra Clarke

Chandra Clarke hasn't been letting the grass grow under her feet since she completed her BA in 1996. She earned a master of science degree in space studies from the University of North Dakota. She started her own editing and proofreading company, Scribendi.com, that is now a global concern with over 100 employees. Notes the company's website: "We now edit more than a million words a week, more than Shakespeare wrote in his entire career." Together with her husband and business partner, Clarke has three young boys ranging in age from seven months to five years.

"I chose AU straight out of high school for a number of reasons. At the time, universities were really crowded — I was hearing stories about first-year psychology classes having hundreds of students in them and the quality of the education suffering as a result. I knew I had a better chance of getting support when I needed it from the Athabasca tutoring system.

"It also made a lot of sense economically. I was able to live at home and hold a full-time job. I could purchase the courses one after another, or a few at a time. As a result, I graduated debt-free."

"The flexibility and range of delivery options is wonderful. I loved the fact that, if you're so inclined, you can work through the materials much more quickly than at a typical university and accomplish your goals faster. The programs are just as

"It [AU] also made a lot of sense economically. I was able to live at home and hold a full-time job. I could purchase the courses one after another, or a few at a time. As a result, I graduated debt-free."

rigorous and thorough as what you'd get elsewhere, but you don't have to wait for the instructor to dole out the course materials. And at the other end of that scale, if 'life' happens and something comes up, you've got the scheduling flexibility to catch up later. I also managed to get some decent travel time in during this period of my life."

Earning her degree provided a tremendous sense of accomplishment. "I had set and achieved my goal, done so without saddling myself with a huge debt to pay off and I'd also been able to work in my chosen field (journalism) and get relevant work experience. That's important, as most students who go to university right out of high school have to hold down part-time jobs that may pay the bills, but which don't really do much for their careers."

She had become managing editor of a small weekly newspaper by the time she graduated. She says working towards a degree on her own gave her the confidence and time management skills to leave her job and start her own business.

"I've always preferred to be able to take charge and take responsibility for doing things. I found being a managing editor very frustrating because I had been tasked with the responsibility for putting out a good product but I didn't have the authority to make the changes needed to have that happen. Today we'd say I hadn't been properly empowered."

The highlights of the experience have included "watching what I've built grow to where it is today. It's not just about correcting people's spelling, it's about helping people achieve their goals. A

well-written college application can make someone's scholastic career; an error-free business presentation can mean the difference between a deal or no deal."

The flip side is trying to find enough time and manpower to accomplish everything she wants to. When she has time to sit and contemplate the future, Clarke looks to the stars.

"As you might guess by my choice of graduate degree, space exploration and science in general have always been passions of mine and in the not-too-distant future, I plan to do a PhD in the public understanding of science. I'd also like to get into philanthropy and find ways to fund research and development in various projects."



Liz McDougall

## Liz McDougall

Liz McDougall, MN (2008), has been staying active as project coordinator for a documentary that deals with homelessness in her city. Together with her commitment to making a difference, her AU studies helped lay the groundwork for the role she was to play in the production of *Home Safe Calgary*.

"I returned to Athabasca University for my masters at age 49, 26 years after completing my undergraduate degree. Imagine this . . . my first degree (bachelor of science in nursing) took place at a time when we used the typewriter . . . and no one had personal computers. But



the world had changed. I felt the need to join the 21st century. Knowledge and learning were a priority.

“So with a very busy household and three teenagers, I decided to go back to school because I had lots to learn. I wanted to work in community health. I didn’t want to sit in class, I wanted to learn on my own time. So Athabasca University was a natural fit for me. I was motivated and keen to learn – I was just very nervous. But I absolutely loved it – I got so absorbed in the learning.

“The biggest impact for me was the gelling of all the years of practical knowledge with the academic, research-based knowledge. The ways of knowing nursing just expanded for me. What I learned most was that I had the know-how to do my work, but what I gained were the critical thinking skills and theory to augment this knowledge. I learned how to learn, how to research, how to write, how to communicate important ideas to others and how to influence others to do their work in the best way possible.

“In one of my courses, Community Health Development, I completed a community assessment on children and families experiencing homelessness in Calgary. My final project was entitled *Homeless Children’s Need for Enhanced Child Health and Development Intervention*.

“It was my advanced learning at Athabasca University that gave me the confidence, knowledge and expertise to participate in and contribute to such a worthy endeavour.”

## Michael Sweeney

After retiring from the Canadian Forces, in 2002, Michael Sweeney decided to go back to school. His choice: Athabasca University. After graduating with a master of distance education (MDE) in 2005, he returned to work on a part-time basis doing consulting work in the Greater Toronto Area. During the summer of 2006, he returned to the military for a short period, supervising 160 teenagers at the cadet camp at Canadian Forces Base Borden. He says of the experience: “It was a great if exhausting couple of months. The rock climbing and canoeing were fine; acting as dad for the young cadets was the real challenge.”

In March of 2007, he returned to work with the Canadian Forces on a full-time basis, this time as chief of staff at the Canadian Forces Support Training Group in Borden. CFSTG is responsible for training for many of the occupations that are common to the army, navy and air force — cooks, logistics personnel, firefighters, a variety of different types of technicians, and development and personnel selection officers.

“This has been an extremely busy period in Borden because we are both increasing production and modernizing training delivery methodologies. My MDE background has proven invaluable. Later this year I’ll return again to civilian life, taking up a strategic planning position within the Department of National Defence.

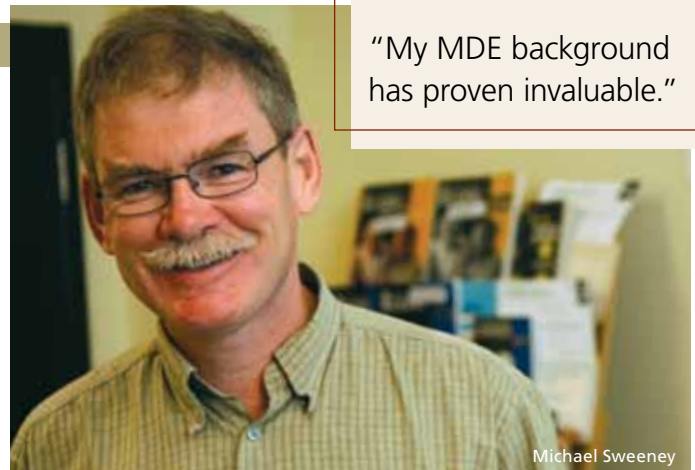
“Returning to the CF after more than four years away, including two years working exclusively on the MDE, provided me with a new perspective on many old issues. Perhaps most importantly, I can now speak with much more confidence and first-hand experience on the capabilities and limitations of distance education. For current students, my main message is that what you think you will take away from the program and what you actually do may be very different. I originally planned to become more involved

“When I heard about documentaries that were to be made about family homelessness in Canada, I approached the director, Laura Sky, about my interest in and knowledge of this area. I had been most outraged and absolutely appalled that there were children in my city who were living in church basements at that time, changing churches nightly for sometimes up to six months at a time.

“The research I had completed indicated these children’s health and development were potentially being compromised by these inadequate living conditions. This was an urgent matter. So the documentary was an ideal medium and mechanism to raise awareness about the issues and to help communities develop alternative solutions to adequate, affordable housing for families. I worked with Sky Works Foundation in the research and production phases of the documentary, a life-changing experience. It was my advanced learning at Athabasca University that gave me the confidence, knowledge and expertise to participate in and contribute to such a worthy endeavour.”

Recently retired, McDougall is a part-time consultant with not-for-profit agencies, organizations and networks, and remains actively involved in a volunteer capacity with Home Safe as an advisor on the community development and dissemination phase of the project.

*Home Safe Calgary* premiered in October 2008 and has been screened at numerous events and venues in the city. Additional projects set in Toronto, Hamilton and northern Ontario are in the works. For information, contact Sue Hutch at (403) 803-9100 or suehutch@nucleus.com.



“My MDE background has proven invaluable.”

Michael Sweeney

with instructional design but have found myself focusing on training and education management. If you are like me, you’ll probably find that the MDE opens many doors that you had not previously considered.”

Since completing the MDE, life changes have not been confined solely to work. At home, Sweeney and his wife have moved on to new stages in their lives. Their youngest headed off to university a year ago; Sweeney notes that they are now talking to the dog a lot more than they used to. Although he did much of the cooking when he was studying, he and his wife are once again splitting work in the kitchen about equally.

When he isn’t talking to his dog, curled up with a good book, or tackling new recipes in the kitchen, Sweeney is active in his community. He sits on the board of directors of the Barrie Literacy Council and raises funds for the Simcoe-Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre.



Nadine Tobin

“Athabasca University has become synonymous to me with some of the principles we as Canadians treasure: justice, equality, opportunity and freedom.”

I moved to Calgary where I again applied to a university program and was denied entry because I had not completed grade 13 in Ontario — the equivalent of a grade 12 diploma — even though I had by this time accumulated a number of university courses with an excellent GPA. In frustration, I abandoned my hopes of obtaining a nursing degree.

“I began this portion of my education two and a half years ago. I rapidly discovered I not only had to retrain myself to write papers but also how to access a virtual library, communicate with professors online and become motivated to do assignments, complete readings and navigate a computer system completely alien to me — all without direct support. I was terrified! I became paralyzed with uncertainty and my insecurities multiplied. I am certain many of you may recall the agonizing dread you felt when first accessing a new course online, when opening the marked section of submitted assignments or sitting down to write an exam. After completing that initial course and gaining some much-needed confidence, I began to enjoy the thrill of attending class in my pyjamas, in the middle of the night and on weekends.

## Nadine Tobin

Nadine Tobin, BN (2009), a nurse since 1981, was the recipient of the Governor General’s Silver Medal. AU presents the award annually to the student graduating from an undergraduate program with the highest grade average in Athabasca University credits. The following is an excerpt from Tobin’s address at the June 12, 2009 convocation ceremony:

“I began this journey many years ago. When I was a young woman, I became ill and spent some time in hospital. During my recovery, I became more and more interested in the work performed by the nurses taking care of me.... This pivotal event led me to apply for a position in a school for licensed practical nurses in Winnipeg and I graduated proudly in 1981. Not long after beginning my career as an LPN, I determined I wanted to further my education and obtain my degree in nursing. My first application was in 1983 and I was denied entry into a BN program because I was ‘only an LPN.’ I was accepted into the general studies faculty where I hoped to achieve the required minimum GPA to transfer into the nursing program.

“Well, life intervened and a few years later

Life again intervened and 11 years ago I became a mother. Motherhood became my primary focus in life and I worked steadily as an LPN while providing the best home I could for my daughter and myself.

“A few years ago, a good friend of mine was facing a very long recovery from a serious illness and she challenged me with the question: how many more years was I going to stand still before I went back and obtained that nursing degree? My mother provided the final incentive when she agreed to come and live with us for weeks at a time so I could concentrate on studying. I realized then that this was something I needed to do.

“Where to go became the next serious challenge. The conventional schools had discouraged me, I was in no position to give up my day job and so I therefore began my search for a program which would not only accommodate my schedule but one which might recognize my past efforts. I found one. Athabasca University not only accepted me into the LPN-BN bridging program but actually gave me credit for my LPN education and some of those courses I had taken so long ago when my dream was new.

“Athabasca University has become synonymous to me with some of the principles we as Canadians treasure: justice, equality, opportunity and freedom. This university, in both its virtual and real senses, through the variety of programs it offers and the talents, wit, wisdom and compassion of the faculty who deliver them, has prepared us to become life-long learners. We have graduated informed with the skills and inspiration that will give us the courage and framework to try new things and explore our potential in ways perhaps not envisioned if we had completed our journey in a conventional university environment.

“Along the way — coached, supported, challenged and mentored — we developed extraordinary teaching, planning, organizing, team building, problem solving, crisis management and relationship management skills relevant to the 21st century. These skills, coupled with the promise of our chosen professions and our motivation and passion, will allow us to become leaders and inspire the men and women who will come after us.”



Winston Kassim

## AU alumnus appointed to Order of Canada

In the July 2009 appointments to the Order of Canada, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, announced a name familiar to many at Athabasca University.

Winston Kassim, MBA (2000), has been named to the Order of Canada, the country’s highest civilian honour for lifetime achievement. He was cited “For his contributions as a community volunteer who played a key role in establishing several community and religious centres that provide outreach services to refugees and immigrants.” His career includes more than 10 years of service with the International Development and Relief Foundation, most recently as vice-chair.

He is currently head, Strategic Initiatives, Royal Bank.



## ALUMNI HONOURS

The current winners of both annual Athabasca University alumni relations awards are worthy of recognition



Melissa Blake

**Melissa Blake**, BAdmin (1994), is the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award, which recognizes the accomplishments of an AU graduate who has brought honour and prestige to the university. She is serving her second term as mayor of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, which encompasses Fort McMurray, Alberta.



Gustavo Zentner

**Gustavo Zentner**, MBA (2005), has received the Rising Star Award, which acknowledges an AU graduate who has demonstrated leadership and made significant contributions or career advancement in his or her field. Zentner is the president of InterPOC Inc., a leading Canadian-based consulting firm focused on international trade and strategic business development.

Do you know of someone worthy of nominating? For more information please call 1-800-788-9041, extension 5053 or email [aualumni@athabascau.ca](mailto:aualumni@athabascau.ca)

## calendar of events

Alumni Relations is committed to building and fostering the relationship between Athabasca University and its graduates. Through alumni events, volunteerism, communications and a variety of services and benefits, Alumni Relations encourages lifelong involvement of alumni in University life.

As a graduate or current student, you are invited to attend one of our receptions. We always look forward to bringing together our alumni, students, special guests and faculty. These gatherings are a great opportunity to stay connected with the university and meet people who share a love of life-long learning. And the food and refreshments are on us.

### November

**Wednesday, November 4**  
Regina, Sask.  
5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
Hotel Saskatchewan  
2125 Victoria Ave.

**Thursday, November 26**  
Prince Albert, Sask.  
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
Prince Albert &  
District Chamber of  
Commerce Luncheon  
Marlboro Inn, 67 13th St. E.

**Thursday, November 26**  
Saskatoon, Sask.  
5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
Saskatoon & District  
Chamber of Commerce  
Business After Hours  
Sheraton Cavalier, Top of the Inn,  
612 Spadina Cres. E.

### December

**Wednesday, December 9**  
Victoria, B.C.  
5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
Ted Harrison Studio  
2004 Oak Bay Ave.

**Thursday, December 10**  
Vancouver, B.C.  
5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
Deeley Motorcycle Exhibition  
1875 Boundary Road

**Wednesday, December 16**  
Calgary, AB  
5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
Calgary Chamber of Commerce  
100 6 Ave. SW

For more information about events and a map to each location, visit <http://www.athabascau.ca/alumni> and follow the links. To RSVP, please call 1-800-788-9041, extension 5053 or email [aualumni@athabascau.ca](mailto:aualumni@athabascau.ca).

# notable news

by Patricia Balderston

## Jason Potter

MBA (2005), was recognized in May 2009 as a recipient of Canada's Top 40 Under 40™ award, which annually honours 40 Canadians under the age of 40 for vision, leadership, innovation, achievement and community involvement. As president operations, Atlantic region, for Sobeys Inc., he is responsible for the company's retail and wholesale operations in the four Atlantic provinces.

## Helen Brenner

MBA (2001), joined Northumberland Hills Hospital in Cobourg, Ontario, as chief nursing executive and vice-president of patient services in January 2009. Prior to joining NHH, she was the director of the regional nephrology system at Lakeridge Health Oshawa.

## Susan McKeller

MBA (2001), has been added as human resource manager with Garden Protein International, Inc., where she is

responsible for developing industry-leading HR programs and hiring and retaining staff for GPI. The company makes a branded line of plant-based foods marketed under the gardein™ brand in North America.

## Carolyn Mitchell

MN (2007), has been recruited as a nurse practitioner to the Cumberland Health Authority in Nova Scotia. She has more than 23 years' nursing experience in a variety of settings, including ICU, coronary intensive care and home care.

## Susan Stoneson

MN (2007), is a current advanced nursing practice student who was one of three nurses who each received the National Award of Excellence in Nursing for First Nations and Inuit communities as part of National Nursing Week (May 2009). She has been working for Health Canada as a community health nurse and travels all over British Columbia as a nurse-in-charge in various communities.



## Helping Students Get To Work

by Tamra Ross

**F**or many, a university education is more about personal fulfillment than employment, but ultimately most students want a great job that matches their learning. Finding one isn't always easy though, as graduates learn when they begin their job search.

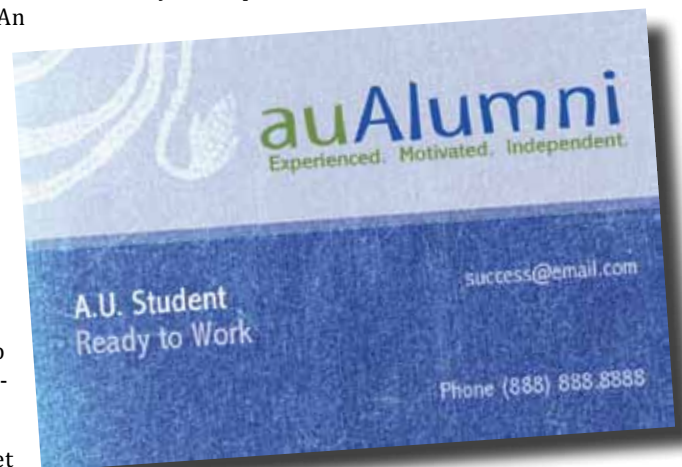
"Students have told us that they wish AU had a career centre to help them with job search skills and contacts with employers," says Karl Low, President of AUSU. "Many have full degrees but they haven't had a lot of experience with developing an effective resume or cold calling HR departments. They aren't sure where to begin."

AUSU often gets request from students who need resume help and has referred many to the provincial governments' career development and skills assessment programs. "An ongoing concern is that students aren't maximizing their potential if they aren't finding jobs they really love and that allow them to grow," says Low.

To address this need, AUSU is building a set of career resources for students through the AUSU.org web site. In collaboration with the Personnel Department, AUSU has launched a site [www.goodstaff.jobs] where students can post resumes for employers to browse and where employers can place their own listings for jobs, practicums and internships.

"It's important that we get as many students signed up as possible to encourage employers to visit our site. We're planning some promotions to increase usage of the site," said Low.

Students should also watch the site for more tips and resources and let AUSU know what resources would be most useful to them.





# The Athletes of AU

by Patricia Balderston

## 1894

The International Olympic Committee was formed because French aristocrat Pierre de Coubertin, an active sportsman, made it his mission in life to revive the Olympic Games.

## 1896

The first Olympic Games of the modern era were held in Athens. Athletes competed in athletics (track and field), aquatics, cycling, fencing, gymnastics, shooting, tennis, weightlifting and wrestling.

## 1924

The Winter Olympics began and included bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, skating and skiing.

## 2010

The Olympic motto *Citius, Altius, Fortius* (Swifter, Higher, Stronger) remains, as does the Olympic creed: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."

**W**hat has changed over the years are advances in science and technology. These have brought about new equipment, new training methods, increased knowledge of nutrition and physiology and increased opportunities for travel and competition, all of which have combined to create athletes who are "swifter, higher and stronger" far, far beyond what de Coubertin had in mind.

The focus, for these athletes, has gone beyond simply training and competing — they must be versed in media relations and public speaking, they must be marketing experts able to sell a product and they must be skilled communicators using websites, Twitter and blogging.

If the thrill of representing their countries and the ancillary demands are not enough, a few desiring more challenges also pursue post-secondary education. Athabasca University's "anytime, anywhere" philosophy works especially well for the athletes who must make time for coursework after competitions or while they are waiting in an airport or train station to head off to their next event.

"Post-secondary students . . . will often iterate how difficult it is to keep up with their studies and achieve good grades. Now imagine doing so with the added challenge of training for the Olympic Winter Games. Their focus is remarkable," said Bruce Deacon, manager, Education and Community Relations, Canadian Olympic Committee. "Athletes who successfully balance the demands of study and training are a unique breed. They have exceptional abilities to manage their time, deal with fatigue and stay focused on two competing goals."

Here are some of the Athabasca University students preparing to compete in Vancouver 2010:

## Madeleine Williams — Cross-Country Skiing

Madeleine Williams has been the second-ranked female distance cross-country skier in Canada for the past two years. She has been a World Cup team member in 2008 and 2009, the national championships silver medalist in 2009, overall Nor-Am champion 2007 and 2009, national senior team member from 2004 to 2007 and world junior championships and junior national team member in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

In 2009, she graduated from Athabasca University with a bachelor of arts degree.

Her passion for skiing began at a very early age, but she says she started racing when she was 12, following in her brother's footsteps. After that, there was no looking back. "My first season racing I was successful and all other pursuits suddenly came second to skiing."

She turned to AU for her education when she realized after completing courses at the University of Calgary that "I was never going to finish a degree there while skiing was my priority. (At AU) I was able to make my schooling fit around my skiing because I was unwilling to make skiing fit into school. There isn't anywhere else that I know of that offers that kind of flexibility."

She also selected AU because "I knew that I would get a quality education there." As her mother is a professor at AU, some inside knowledge was provided.

With her degree under her belt, her focus returns to skiing — specifically, to the goal of competing in Vancouver 2010. Although she has been on senior national and World Cup teams since 2003, she still must qualify at trials races in December to represent Canada in Vancouver.

When she is no longer skiing competitively, she plans to pursue grad studies in forensic psychology and then to move on, possibly, to law school.

# a winning educational strategy



Madeleine Williams

Photo: Blaise MacMullin



“At AU I was able to make my schooling fit around my skiing . . . there isn’t anywhere else that I know of that offers that kind of flexibility.”

Madeleine Williams and her mother, Kathy, AU’s Bachelor of Arts program director, celebrate her graduation family-style.



“Whenever our coach complains that our bags are too heavy . . . we always blame our AU textbooks!”



Photo: Pam Doyle

Sandra Keith

## Sandra Keith — Biathlon

Sandra Keith is no stranger to competing on the world stage. She won a gold medal at the European Cup in 2003 and represented Canada in 2006 at the Turin Olympics. She had a breakthrough year in 2008 with an 11th place finish at the Biathlon World Cup.

She has been a bachelor of commerce student since 2002. “The most vivid memory I have of everyone working on their AU courses together is when we’re . . . in Kananaskis Country (Alberta) . . . at a training camp for elite cross-country skiers and biathletes. After a long morning of skiing on the glacier and a big lunch, everyone pulls out their textbooks and starts working away. Whenever our coach complains that our bags are too heavy or we have too much stuff, we always blame our AU textbooks!”

“It is now crunch time before the 2010 Olympics and it seems like every national team athlete I’ve talked to recently is getting ready for the last qualification period to make the Olympic team. For biathlon, the team doesn’t get named until early January, so there are still quite a few races in December that will solidify the team. I’m having a good training season, so am hopeful that all goes as planned and I’m racing in Vancouver 2010!”

In addition to her athletic accomplishments, Keith has received both the AU Academic Leadership Scholarship and the Community Leadership Award, presented to students who maintain a high academic standard and who have proven leadership skills combined with active participation in extracurricular activities.



Photo: Bob Nishikawa

Graham Nishikawa

## Graham Nishikawa — Cross-Country Skiing

Cross-country skier Graham Nishikawa has been on the senior national ski team for two seasons. He has competed for Canada over the past several years at world junior and world under-23 championships and on the World Cup circuit. He is currently ranked 6th in Canada (distance). He was the overall winner of the 2008-2009 Nor-Am circuit and was two-time silver medalist at the 2009 national championships.

He has been involved in cross-country skiing since the age of four. He started as a member of the Jackrabbit program at the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club and at age 14 began racing competitively as a member of the Yukon ski team.

His long-term goals include competing at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver and having a long and successful career on the World Cup circuit. He has been taking AU courses since 2003.

## Perianne Jones — Cross-Country Skiing

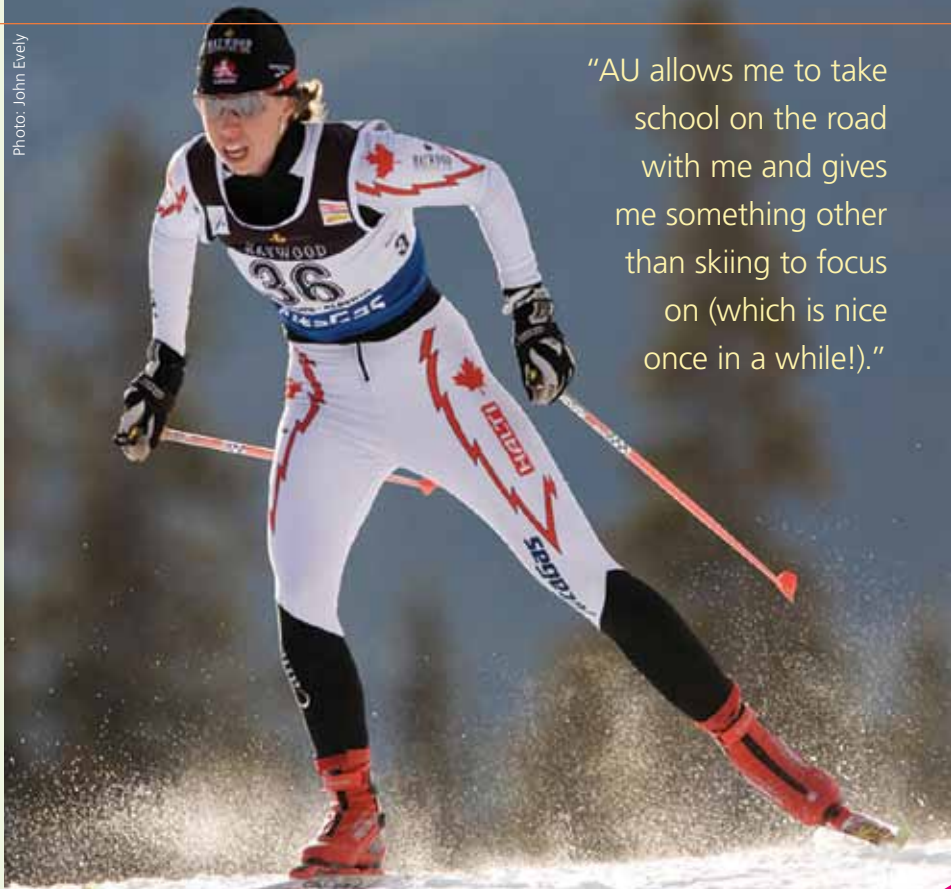
Perianne Jones had always been very dedicated to skiing but she fully focused on the sport after graduating from high school, moving to Canmore from Ontario.

She had tried to go to the University of Calgary for the first few years, “but the driving in and out was cutting into training and recovery time, so I decided to take some courses from AU. It seemed like the best option and many of my teammates had taken courses from AU, so I signed up!

“AU allows me to take school on the road with me and gives me something other than skiing to focus on (which is nice once in a while!). I spend three quarters of the year away from home at training camps and races, so it’s perfect to have AU courses that I can do anywhere.”

She was a member of the junior team for three years and is currently on the senior national team. Last winter she paired up with Sara Renner at the world championships to come sixth in the sprint relay. She has already qualified for the Olympics in February, so between now and then “all I have to do is lots of good training and preparation!”

Photo: John Evelyn



Perianne Jones

“AU allows me to take school on the road with me and gives me something other than skiing to focus on (which is nice once in a while!).”

Jaime Robb



Photo: Christian Manzoni

## Jaime Robb — Biathlon

Jaime Robb began skiing when he was two and by the ripe old age of nine, he was keen to try shooting. Biathlon was a good fit. After he graduated from high school in 2002, he moved to Canmore, Alberta to train with the junior national biathlon team. Competing at the Olympics became his full-time pursuit. Full time, that is, with the exception of his Athabasca University studies.

“The first course I took was a political science course and I loved it (though I admit, I needed an extra extension!). I chose AU because the courses are easily transferable to other post-secondary institutions. It is important to me to be able to continue my studies while pursuing sport and AU was a great option to do so. AU courses work with my schedule because I spend roughly one third of the year on the road training and competing in biathlon. I need to be able to bring my coursework with me so I can work at my own pace in any environment.”

He has competed in 16 World Cup races, spent nine years on the national biathlon team and has won a bronze medal at the 2009 IBU Cup and a bronze medal at the world junior championships. Now his goal is to qualify for Vancouver 2010.

After the Games, he plans to finish his bachelor’s degree and perhaps continue with further studies. “I am keen to start working and am looking to give back to my community through public speaking and coaching efforts.”

“The first course I took was a political science course and I loved it . . .”



# ...In the Open

by Eva von Buchenroder



Illustration: Christopher Hunt®

Leaders in  
their field — an  
AU degree means  
a forward-looking,  
fresh-thinking,  
barrier-free,  
21<sup>st</sup> century  
education

... and that, my friend,  
is progress

There's no doubt that AU is flexible. Students can work anytime, from anywhere. Having lived with an AU student, I've seen this flexibility first-hand. A former student of a traditional university, I scrambled green-eyed out the door to class many freezing winter mornings as my roommate, an Athabasca University student, sat snugly ensconced with a laptop and blanket, already at work — when he was up that early. Aside from perks like these, AU is accessible. It's known as Canada's Open University because it removes barriers to education. No matter where you live or what your educational background is, chances are AU will work for you.

What about the quality of education offered by AU? How does the degree of my late-rising roommate compare to my own? Well, for starters, the educators at AU are recognized experts in their fields. That English prof submitting feedback on your paper has in all likelihood just published a novel. Athabasca University is accredited in both Canada and the United States. That means that other North American institutions recognize AU's quality. In fact, students at traditional universities can use AU courses towards degrees at their own schools. And the learning that happens through distance education is very rich. Students actively, directly engage with the material. There's no drifting off in sultry lecture halls, forced to unscramble your neighbour's hieroglyphs the next day.

A quality AU education opens doors — and not the kind that lead to -30 C dashes to class.

# Making a philanthropic difference at AU

## How can you help?

Public and private support is crucial to sustaining excellence in scholarship, learning resources and technology at Athabasca University, the pioneer of distance education and e-learning. Your financial support will build the university's capacity to deliver academic excellence to students within Alberta, across Canada and around the world.

Gifts from alumni, parents, students, corporations, foundations and other friends help AU make a lasting impact. Your donations help students achieve excellence, encourage knowledge and discovery and support teaching and learning locally, nationally and internationally.

Through philanthropy, you support Athabasca University's mission to remove barriers that restrict access to and success in, university-level studies and its commitment to increasing the equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide.

If you are considering a making a philanthropic gift to Athabasca University, we urge you to contact one of our fund development staff to discuss your gift prior to finalizing the details of your gift arrangement. We are always available to assist you. Please contact Fund Development 1.800.788.9041, extension 7323 or email [development@athabascau.ca](mailto:development@athabascau.ca).

## I wish to make a gift of:

\$250    \$100    \$50    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque (made payable to Athabasca University)

VISA    MasterCard    AMEX

Monthly gift    One-time gift

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  I request that this donation be kept anonymous

A charitable tax receipt will be mailed to you. Charitable Organization Registration No. 10673 5830 RR0001

- Scholarships and Bursaries
- Research
- Programs and projects
- Capital Enhancements
- Area of greatest need

OPEN 2009/2010



Please return to:  
Athabasca University  
Open Magazine  
1200, 10011 - 109 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S8  
Canada



# Experience the AU Advantage

excellence • openness • flexibility • innovation

Barriers...

*What barriers?*

Restrictions...

*We're open-  
access*

Closed doors...

*There are  
no doors —  
we're online*

Failure...

*Not an option*

Success...

*Priceless*



[www.open-au.com](http://www.open-au.com)  
[www.athabascau.ca](http://www.athabascau.ca)

