

the insider

A newsletter published for everyone in the Athabasca University community

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May 27, 2013

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OPENING UP AND BRANCHING OUT

In a [YouTube video](#), MAIS graduate Emily Weiskopf-Ball talks about how the integrated and interdisciplinary nature of the program gave her the freedom to discover herself and find her passion: food studies. Her final project was an auto-ethnographic study of the foods her family serves at special occasions. She is expanding this research in her PhD studies by examining cultural foods in her community



Posted on The Landing:
<https://landing.athabascau.ca>

Athabasca University

Health and Safety Award to Honour Rob Koons

AU'S ANNUAL AWARD FOR HEALTH and Safety Excellence has been renamed in honour of Rob Koons, a grounds technician who worked at AU for 25 years until his death, of cancer, in November 2012.

The Rob Koons Award for Health and Safety Excellence will be given annually to up to two employees or teams in recognition of their achievements in health and safety initiatives. The award will recognize leadership and excellence in proactive and preventive health, safety, wellness and environmental initiatives.

"We hope that by renaming this award in Rob's memory, we can honour the pride and care that Rob always took with his work and the contribution he made to the AU community," Facilities and Services operations administrator Brenda Richards said.

Koons was instrumental in fulfilling the university's landscape mission by maintaining a perfectly manicured natural setting on university grounds.

He was involved in the development of university health and safety initiatives through the various safe work procedures implemented in his department and through his 15-year term as AUPE representative to the Occupational Health and Safety Committee. In 2011, he was the first co-recipient of the Award for Health and Safety Excellence for his commitment to the health and safety of his AU colleagues.



Rob Koons working in AU's Community Garden last year.

Koons was also involved in establishing the Community Garden at AU last year. "The garden would not have happened if not for all the work that Rob put into it," said Marilyn Bittorf, a member of the garden organizing team. "He was a tremendous help."

Koons was an avid sports and outdoor enthusiast who excelled at any sport he tried, including curling, golf, skiing, swimming, kayaking and motocross. He also loved camping and was an avid and accomplished photographer, winning the grand prize in Canadian Geographic's twenty-fifth annual photo contest in August 2009 for a nature photo taken at Eleanor Lake in southeastern British Columbia.

Koons embodied the AU spirit and enriched the fabric of the Athabasca community. He left behind his wife Serena, sons Michael and Adam, and daughter Mikayla (Kaylee).

Nominations for the Rob Koons Award for Health and Safety Excellence will be accepted until July 1 each year. Application forms can be found on the [Occupational Health and Safety webpage](#).

Science Exams Go Online

“Sitting in front of a computer is not the same as curling up on one’s couch

TWELVE COURSES IN THE FACULTY OF Science are now offering their exams online through AU’s MuchLearning exam system as the work of the Exam Harmonization Project continues.

Science students around the world simply have to go to their chosen invigilation centre, sign in to their myAU portal and start writing: no more postal delays, no more lost exams, no more stamps.

The science exams represent the first wave of exams to go live in AU’s new online exam system.

A second wave, of humanities and social science exams, will follow soon. According to MuchLearning implementation co-ordinator Kate Nunn, feedback from program co-ordinators, tutors and markers has been overwhelmingly positive. “There is no question that marking an exam online changes the relationship between a marker and her or his pile of papers,” she said. “Sitting in front of a computer is not the same as curling up on one’s couch. Nonetheless, most markers and students, so far, have indicated that they look forward to faster turnaround times and fewer lost exams.

The university looks forward to significant postage savings.”

In getting the science exams online, the exam harmonization team made important inroads toward mass implementation of online exams: developing new features in the exam system, systematizing training for markers and course assistants, establishing administrative processes and technical support systems, and communicating the online move to academics, tutors, students and invigilators.

For more information about AU’s new online exam system contact [Kate Nunn](#).

Microbiology Labs



Serena Koons, B.Sc., MLS, and Biology 230 and 235 tutor Dr. Shawn Irwin help instruct a microbiology lab session. The 16 students from five provinces who attended lab sessions in Athabasca from May 7 to 10 logged a total of 24,299 travel km to do so. The lab sessions are often the only opportunity for classmates to meet and share experiences. Students make the most of it when they are here with group barbeques and study sessions. (Photo by Ian Schofield)

Greater Access to Legal Services Needed in Northern Alberta

AN AU STUDY HAS FOUND THAT THE Internet offers the best means of addressing the difficulties faced by residents of northern Alberta rural, remote and aboriginal communities in attempting to access legal services. The study was funded by a \$96,000 grant from the Alberta Law Foundation.

The report from the study, *Expanding Access to Legal Services in Alberta through E-Learning*, was authored by Dr. Mohamed Ally of the Centre for Distance Education and Dale Dewhurst and Archie Zariski of the Centre for Social Sciences, assisted by research consultant Patricia Martin.

The central focus of the project was to develop recommendations to the ALF based on three objectives: to conduct a needs assessment of unmet demand for legal services in northern Alberta rural, remote and aboriginal communities; to identify the available information and communication infrastructure to assist with delivering such services and northern Albertans' ability to access and use it; and to determine how to respond to unmet demand through targeted legal education and legal service delivery, particularly through e-learning.

To obtain a balance of perspectives from rural and urban participants in culturally diverse communities, the researchers gathered information across northern Alberta through focus groups, town hall meetings and online and written questionnaires. The populations of about half of the communities involved in the study were primarily indigenous. The study provides a snapshot of the experiences and preferences of the residents who responded.

In several ways, the results parallel similar studies in Canada and internationally, Dewhurst said. "What was surprising was that almost 40 per cent of respondents indicated that they or their family members had legal problems in the past year; however, fewer than 30 per cent of these people were able to obtain assistance from a lawyer or legal services organization." The rest either did nothing or tried to resolve the problem on their own or with the help of family or friends, he said.

Based on these results, Dewhurst said, there is a clear demand for expanded access to legal education and information in northern Alberta, a demand that can be met, in part, through centralized information portals. More importantly, there is a significant shortage of legal services providers and lawyers in northern Alberta, he said. "If legal education could be provided at a distance, there would be an increased chance that graduates would remain in their home communities and begin to fill these legal services gaps."

The report makes 13 recommendations. One is that legal awareness and empowerment should be increased through the Internet, focusing on social, family and economic issues and health and government benefits, rather than on legal concepts alone.

Another of the recommendations is the creation of a one-stop, Internet-facilitated public advice network staffed by legal stewards and mentors for access to cross-professional information and advice.

Dewhurst said that the ALF was pleased by the depth of the work, the extensive literature review and the sample size achieved in the study. The report will provide the ALF with useful information in moving forward with one-stop legal information services for northern Albertans, he said.

Based upon these results, Dewhurst said, additional research collaborations between AU and the ALF are now being considered.

A full copy of the final report is available on the [Legal Studies website](#) and, in numerous formats, including audio reader, through the [AU Library](#).

Digital Storytelling through E-Lab

MANY STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE AND places go untold. With digital storytelling, people can create their own stories about important personal and community issues.

The [*Digital Storytelling Workshop*](#), one of a number of workshops available through the [*AU E-Lab*](#), is designed to introduce users to digital storytelling, to outline the characteristics of a good digital story and to show how to produce digital stories. The workshop links users to some of the best digital storytelling websites and to websites about the technologies they may want to use.

A digital story is usually two to three minutes long and is told in the first person.

It is created by combining a recorded narrative with still or moving digital images (photographs, letters, news clippings, etc.) and music or other sounds.

The stories may be about a person, an event or an issue about which the narrator feels strongly. Digital storytelling combines oral traditions, the writing process, the power of visuals and the role of digital media in recording.

Photographer, documentarist and digital storyteller [*Daniel Meadows*](#) says digital stories are short, personal multimedia tales, written with feeling and in the first person. "There's a strictness to their construction: 250 words, a dozen or so pictures, and two minutes is about the right length...Digital Stories, when properly done, can be tight as sonnets: multimedia sonnets from the people...and, when imagined as a tool of democratised media, it has, I believe, the potential to change the way we engage in our communities."

Other workshops on AU's e-Lab include comic book software for digital storytelling, online writing, editing digital images, library research skills, academic essay writing and avoiding plagiarism.



A digital storytelling image from the AU e-lab workshop.

Open Magazine Now on the Stands

“Turning people on to science is only natural,”

THE SPRING AND SUMMER 2013 ISSUE of *Open* magazine is now available in hard copy at all AU locations and online at [AU Magazines and Publications](#).

In this issue, readers can learn about TEKRI’s research on the role of artificial intelligence in learning management systems, find out how a new series from AU Press is helping to relieve students’ financial burden, discover why Albert and Pirkko Karvonen believe that “Turning people on to science is only natural,” get an update on AU’s Open Our World Campaign, review highlights of what AU students and alumni have accomplished in the last year, meet students like Nova Scotia CBC Radio host and producer Wendy Bergfeldt and architecture student Craig Rogers, and much more.

Extra copies of *Open* are available through [Blanche Emes](#) in Athabasca, [Erin Ottosen](#) in Edmonton/St. Albert and [Jason Ng](#) in Calgary.

Open is produced by the Advancement Office. Thank you to everyone in the AU community who provided information and photos for this issue or who helped in any other way.

A MAGAZINE FOR THE ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY SPRING/SUMMER 2013 NO. 6

Open

Athabasca University

Climb to the campaign summit
Open Our World builds momentum 8

Learning inside a system that's learning you
Tools that enrich learning by adapting to each learner 12

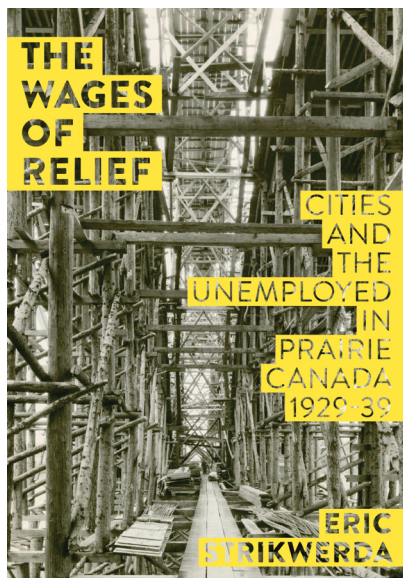
Open your textbooks, please
AU Press launches a series of open-access textbooks 18

RHONDA HAMILTON MN, 2011

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES IN NEED 25

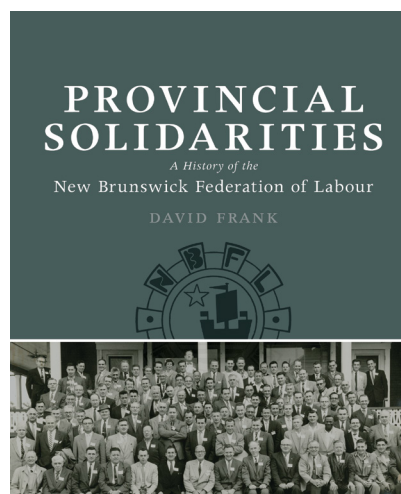
Three New Titles in Labour Studies from AU Press

AU PRESS AIMS TO PUBLISH BOOKS AND other materials that are accessible to labour audiences and the general public, as well as to scholars. May 2013 brings three new labour titles to the AU Press catalogue: Eric Strikwerda's *The Wages of Relief* and two books by David Frank, *Provincial Solidarities* and *Solidarités Provinciales*.



THE WAGES OF RELIEF: CITIES AND THE UNEMPLOYED IN PRAIRIE CANADA, 1929-39

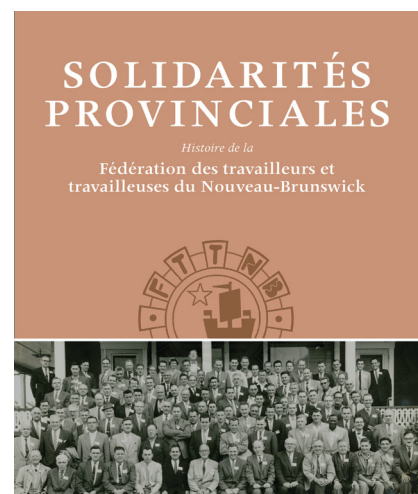
Setting municipal relief administrations of the 1930s within a wider literature on welfare and urban poor relief, Strikwerda highlights the legacy on which relief policymakers relied in determining policy directions and the experiences of the individuals and families that depended on relief for their survival.



PROVINCIAL SOLIDARITIES: A HISTORY OF THE NEW BRUNSWICK FEDERATION OF LABOUR

A pioneering study, written in clear and forceful prose, this is the untold story of provincial labour solidarities that succeeded in overcoming divisions and defeats to raise the status of working men and women in New Brunswick society.

Drawing on archives, newspapers, and workers' own descriptions of their experiences, author David Frank makes an original contribution to the understanding of the political, economic and social development of the province. In so doing, he helps meet the need for an informed public awareness of the history of workers and unions in all parts of Canada.



SOLIDARITÉS PROVINCIALES: HISTOIRE DE LA FÉDÉRATION DES TRAVAILLEURS ET TRAVAILLEUSES DU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

"Sappier surf one recherché de premier order ... chest un outrage tout à fait valuable qui represented un rapport interisland et utile à la connaissance du syndicalisme et de la classe ouvrière."

— Jacques Rouillard, Université de Montréal

To order these or other titles, go the [AU Press](#) website.

2013 FGS Graduate Student Conference

The deadline for grad students to submit a 300-word abstract for a poster or paper presentation at the 2013 Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Student Conference has been extended to midnight on June 3.

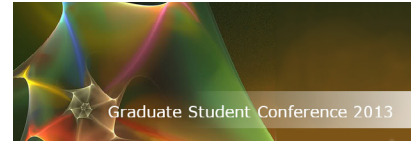
All abstracts must be submitted electronically by completing the online [submission form](#) and will be peer-reviewed by a committee.

Notification of acceptance will be emailed to the submitter by June 24, 2013. All presenters must register for the conference by July 31, 2013.

This conference provides a great opportunity for graduate students to meet each other, share research and get feedback on their work and future publication of their work.

The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn Express, 10010 104 St., Edmonton, from September 13 to 15.

Further information is available on the [conference website](#).



Let's Get Growing



Some of the wonderful plots in last year's Community Garden.

CALLING ALL THUMBS IN ATHABASCA – green, brown, sore and otherwise! It is time to get out of your office, leave the keyboard behind and get your hands dirty.

The Community Garden at AU, across the road from the Academic and Research Centre, is getting ready for its second season. Plots are free.

Water and a few basic tools are provided. Dig, plant, weed, fertilize, enjoy the fresh air and sunshine, meet new friends and grow delicious food.

Information packages and application forms are available from [Diane Morrison](#).

Weather permitting, plots will be available in late May or early June.

Be part of a green and growing development by being part of the Community Garden at AU.

FOLLOW US



Athabasca University's Facebook page has more than 3,500 fans. Check it out at [facebook.com/AthabascaUniversity](https://www.facebook.com/AthabascaUniversity). If you would like something posted onto the AU Facebook page, please contact [Michael Shouldice](#).



The Insider is published for AU faculty and staff members and other members of the AU community by the Advancement Office.

The Insider will be taking a break for the summer. Publication will resume in the fall.

Posted on The Landing:
<https://landing.athabascau.ca>

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