

the insider

A newsletter published for everyone in the Athabasca University community

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Undergraduates in the humanities, social sciences and fine arts can participate in Tomorrow's Idea, Now, a Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS) interdisciplinary research conference to be held in Edmonton from August 17 to 20. See the full story on page 8.

(Photo courtesy of the University of Alberta)



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<https://landing.athabascau.ca/>

Athabasca University 

Dr. Neil Reimer



Neil Reimer: A Life Dedicated to the Fight for Workers' Rights

Neil Reimer, who received a 2009 AU honorary Doctor of Laws in recognition of his contribution to the lives of working people, passed away on March 29 at the age of 89.

Campaigning for the rights of working people was a life-long preoccupation for Reimer. In 1942, at the age of 21, while employed by the Consumers Co-operative Refinery in Regina, Sask., he organized unionization drives in refineries and chemical plants and on oilrigs and advocated for greater union involvement in worker safety.

Reimer's efforts to create more autonomy for Canadian workers led to the creation of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union, an independent Canadian union in a field once dominated by American-led unions. The ECWU was one of three Canadian unions that merged in 1992 to form the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada.

"Neil's life-long efforts as a trade union organizer, trade union official, politician and social activist have resulted in better representation and better working conditions for Alberta workers and improved social policies for Alberta workers and seniors," AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek said in a recent all-staff email message. "He has also made a large contribution to education for and about working people in Alberta, a contribution that parallels AU's mission to extend education beyond those sectors of society that have been able to benefit from traditional forms of post-secondary education."

"Neil's successful efforts to organize refinery workers in Alberta in the 1950s defied the common wisdom that the entire oil industry was beyond the reach of unionism," Dr. Alvin Finkel said in introducing Reimer to receive his

honorary degree at Convocation 2009. "The Oil Workers International Union rewarded his efforts by making him Canadian director. Under his leadership, the union fought not only for better wages but also for improved safety standards and greater union involvement in enforcing safety."

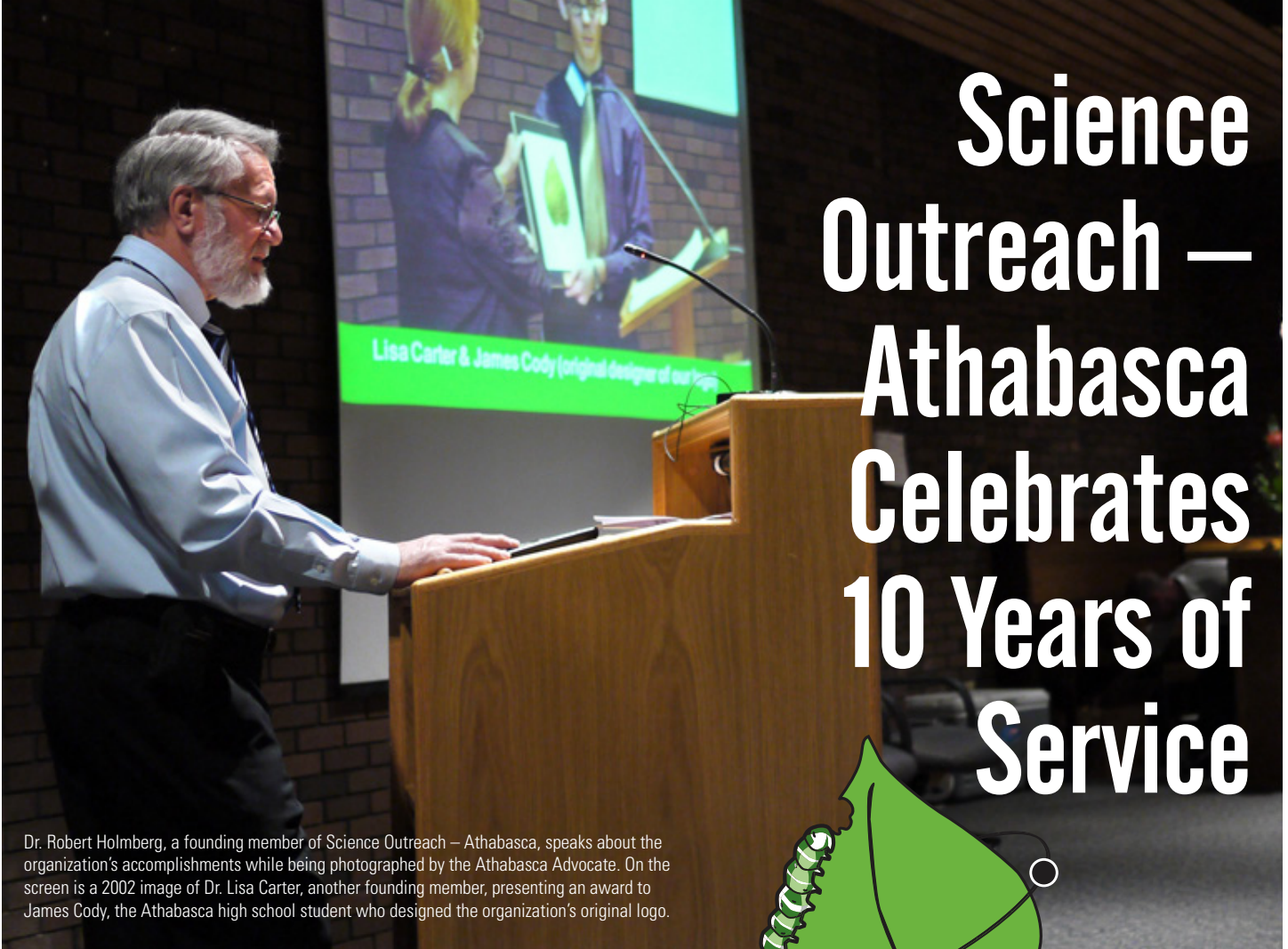
Reimer played a role in founding the national New Democratic Party and later became the NDP's first Alberta leader. He saw politics as a means of advancing the labour movement. "I saw so many things happen that could have been resolved much more easily through political channels," he said in a 2009 interview. "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."

In 1988, Reimer was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in recognition of a lifetime of service. He also received four citations and medals from the Queen, the Alberta Achievement Award, the City of Edmonton's Life Well Lived Award, the Alberta Federation of Labour's Health and Safety Award of Merit, the Jim Shewchuk United Way Award and a place on the Edmonton and District Labour Council's Wall of Fame.

In his eighties, he continued to serve as president of the Alberta Council on Aging and remained active in the Alberta Labour History Institute, an organization which documents the history of Alberta workers.

Reimer is survived by his wife of 66 years, Merry, their daughter Jan, a former mayor of Edmonton, and her husband Hubert, grandson Greg and his wife Lorie, and great-grandchildren Megan and Jeff.

Science Outreach – Athabasca Celebrates 10 Years of Service



Dr. Robert Holmberg, a founding member of Science Outreach – Athabasca, speaks about the organization's accomplishments while being photographed by the Athabasca Advocate. On the screen is a 2002 image of Dr. Lisa Carter, another founding member, presenting an award to James Cody, the Athabasca high school student who designed the organization's original logo.



About 70 people gathered in the Governing Council Chambers at AU Athabasca on April 7 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Science Outreach – Athabasca, a celebration which included the official opening of [Science Outreach's revised website](#), a source of science links for everyone, especially children, parents and teachers.

Since 2001, Science Outreach – Athabasca has organized 339 activities in 19 communities. These events have involved about 24,000 child and adult participants. Although many Canadian universities and other institutions provide science activities for the public, Science Outreach – Athabasca is one of only seven such organizations in the country that present activities outside of the institution.

Science Outreach – Athabasca was founded in 2001 with a grant from Alberta Innovation and Science. Over the past 10 years, eight organizations have contributed \$10,000 or more to the group. Along with donations from local businesses and individuals, funding received has totaled over \$434,700, and at least 95 per cent of that money has been spent locally, mostly on salaries (co-ordinators, web designers, science bibliographer and artists), events and advertising. The remainder was spent externally on exhibit rentals and supplies. Each *free* event costs Science Outreach – Athabasca \$500 to \$1000 for advertising, refreshments, mileage, honoraria, etc. All AU and most external speakers waive honoraria and mileage expenses.

Even with grants, Science Outreach – Athabasca could not have functioned without volunteer help. Nearly every AU department has helped in one way or another. Members of the university community and the general public have volunteered assistance for talks, field trips, science camps and exhibits. Seven local organizations have co-operated with Science Outreach – Athabasca on major events such as film festivals, special presentations and conferences.

In the last three years, Science Outreach – Athabasca initiated what has become the Bibliography of the Athabasca River Basin (BARB). Over 25,000 science references have been handed over to the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute for inclusion in the BARB, which will soon be available online for free public use.

Science Outreach – Athabasca now consists of six scientists from the Centre for Science and five other people from the university or the Athabasca area who are associated with or interested in science. In the past decade, 15 others have been members of the organization.

AU Faculty in the News

Shooting the Messenger

Dr. Gloria Filax, an associate professor of governance in the Centre for Integrated Studies, was a recent guest contributor to the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences website, on which she wrote about social power, inequality and the tone-of-voice argument.

“One of my first realizations that in some situations *what* I had to say was less important than *how* I was perceived to have said it occurred in grade two,” she begins. “I had asked my teacher to let us practice our numbers at our desk instead of at the board because, I offered, we could practice without being watched by our friends. She gave me a withering look and said, ‘I don’t like your tone of voice, young lady.’”

The article came about because of her work on equity issues and institutional power, Filax said. “Who is listened to and who is dismissed? What kinds of issues are taken seriously and what issues languish? I link the kinds of people and the kinds of issues that are dismissed to what Foucault called ‘normalizing discourses.’”

One way in which arguments are dismissed is by personalizing the person making it, Filax said. “I don’t like your tone of voice!” effectively shoots the messenger, allowing the message to be disregarded with a discriminating focus on who made it (e.g., “Such an aggressive woman!”). Dismissing the message by focusing on the messenger is linked to social power and, in institutions like AU, to institutional power as well, Filax said. “Often it is the already socially marginalized whose arguments are dismissed in this way.”

The full article can be found on the [Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences website](#). Filax will be writing another article, on disability and equity issues, for the blog.

To the Bench

Eric Brooks, who has been an AU tutor in the areas of civil liberties, administrative law and the Canadian legal system for the past 11 years, was recently appointed a judge in the Provincial Court of Alberta.

For more on the appointment, please see [Canada Views](#).

Eating Healthy: The Price In South Africa, it costs about 69% more to eat healthier food, says a new study co-authored by an AU professor.

The study, which was featured in *Financial Mail*, was carried out by Dr. Norman Temple, professor of nutrition in the Faculty of Science and Technology, and Dr. Nelia Steyn of South Africa’s Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).

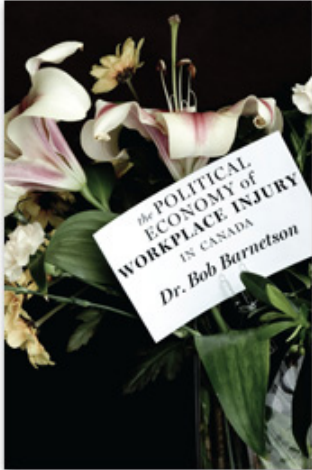
Financial Mail writer Carol Paton reports that Temple and Steyn determined the extra cost of a healthy diet by comparing six commonly consumed foods with healthier alternatives. Low-fat and high-fibre food choices were vastly more expensive, partly explaining South Africa’s rapidly growing epidemic of obesity, especially among black women.

Paton also reports that a by-weight comparison shows healthier options to be between 30 and 110 per cent more expensive; for example, 100 grams of reduced-fat margarine costs 58 per cent more than the regular variety, and whole wheat bread costs 17 per cent more than white bread. When compared on the basis of the energy provided, healthy options were even more costly: fat-free milk was 109 per cent more expensive than full-cream milk, and brown rice was 50 per cent more expensive than white.

“For most South Africans a healthy diet is unaffordable,” a summary of the research said. “Cost is an important factor for South Africans in gaining access to healthier food.” Asking people to switch to foods that cost more would likely require a drop in food prices or the introduction of subsidies or incentives, Temple and Steyn concluded.

The full article is available at [Financial Mail](#).

AU Faculty in the News



The Cost of Workplace Injury

The Political Economy of Workplace Injury in Canada by assistant professor of labour relations Bob Barnetson was featured on the CKUA Radio program *Bookmark* on April 3.

Barnetson's book, published by AU Press, focuses on this question: do employers, with the tacit support of provincial and federal governments, put Canadian workers in harm's way in order to protect their bottom line?

According to AU Press the book "reveals how employers and governments engage in ineffective injury prevention efforts . . . [and] sheds light on this faulty system, highlighting the way in which employers create dangerous work environments yet pour billions of dollars into compensation and treatment."

The recorded interview can be accessed through [CKUA](#).

Sparking a Passion for Research

Sometimes a brief encounter can have a profound impact. Dr. Terry Anderson is the Canada Research Chair in Distance Education at AU. Dr. Jane Brindley, a former AU colleague, recently shared an excerpt from the learning journal of one of her students, Lisa Blaschke, in which Blaschke reflects on her development as a researcher:

"I started out in graduate school with a deep-seated disdain for academics. From years of corporate experience, I found academics to be very smart people, but not very practical or even creative (and with a tendency toward arrogance). . . . For most of my graduate experience, much of my work was based on relating what I learned in class to my business experience and knowledge . . .

"My approach changed at the EDEN (European Distance and E-Learning Network) Research Workshop in 2004 with Terry Anderson's closing keynote. Terry, the antithesis of arrogance, urged participants to become research practitioners. Terry asked each of us to turn to the person next to us and report on something we had learned that contributed to our research during the workshop. It was amazing to hear the buzz of ideas and thoughts in that auditorium. It was during that keynote that the role and importance of research suddenly became clear to me, and a passion for research sparked . . .

"I returned to my graduate studies with an energy and vigour that amazed me. I was no longer driven by getting the degree and grade but instead by a desire to learn everything I possibly could in the field of DE. I poured all of my energy into a paper on cultural issues in DE. The paper was my first *real* research paper. . . . I literally devoured every article I read and loved every minute of it. It was the first paper I didn't write for a grade, but instead for the pure hedonism of research."

"I think it is important," Brindley wrote to Anderson, "for people to know that they are making a difference."



DID YOU KNOW?

Athabasca University's Facebook page now has over 1,300 fans

Athabasca Community Wellness Fair and Spring Trade Show

Discover the many health and wellness benefits available in your community.



**Saturday,
April 30, 2011
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.**

FREE ADMISSION Athabasca Regional Multiplex

Glitter tattoos, Balloon Fairy, face painting and crafts.

Try a new activity like yoga, scrapbooking, water Zumba or Spin Class.

Book a one-on-one session for Reiki, massage, reflexology or a medium reading.

Experience more than 25 wellness related interactive sessions and presentations.

Take a two-hour guided tour of the Muskeg Creek Trail System.

Enjoy a healthy snack or lunch.

Join an Interactive Healthy Cooking Demonstration and so much more.

Purchase a healthy Breakfast from the Athabasca Lions Club (9 -10:30 a.m.).

Browse and shop at vendor displays.

SEE YOU THERE!

AU to Host International Conference on African Business and Development

AU is hosting the [International Academy of African Business and Development \(IAABD\) Conference](#) at the Robbins Health Learning Centre at Grant MacEwan University in Edmonton from May 17 to 20.

Co-chairs for the conference are Dr. Simon Sigué, professor of marketing, and Dr. Jacob Musila, associate professor of financial economics, both of the Faculty of Business, and Dr. Meenal Shrivastava, associate professor of global studies and political economy in the Centre for Global and Social Analysis. According to Sigué, the IAABD event will be the first academic conference focused on business in and with Africa to be held in Canada.

Founded in 1998, the IAABD has established itself as one of the world's leading organizations committed to fostering functional education, broadening and deepening global understanding of the various challenges facing African development and business and advancing alternative solutions to Africa's business and economic challenges.

Planning for the conference began at AU in 2008 when members of the then School of Business wanted the school to become more active in hosting national and international events.

Positive outcomes for both the faculty and AU as a whole are anticipated as a result of hosting the conference, Sigué said. "First, it will help to enhance and accentuate the faculty's credibility which, in the future, can improve our chances of accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Second, it will contribute to boosting AU's international exposure

and strengthening AU's positioning in Africa. Third, this conference complements the efforts that are currently being made to identify new partners abroad and explore new markets. And finally, this conference allows AU to show to businesses in Canada as well as both the federal and provincial governments that it has expertise that can help in dealings with African institutions and governments."

To understand the importance of the conference for AU, Sigué said, one first has to understand Africa's recent role in the global economy. "Africa is now considered one of the world's strongest engines of economic growth," he said. "Africa's huge mineral reserves, combined with its needs in infrastructure, urban development, health, communications, technologies, agriculture, energy, transportation, and education attract investments from all over the world."

In Canada, Sigué said, organizations such as the Canadian Council on Africa, a partner in this conference, are working hard to raise awareness of Africa's promise and opportunities and to convince the federal government to pay more attention to business development in Africa.

The annual IAABD Conference is open to scholars, professionals and students of any nationality who are interested or actively engaged in teaching, research, performance or administration of business and economic development issues as they relate to Africa. It normally draws about 200 delegates from around the world.

Invited speakers this year include Hon. Iris Evans, Alberta minister of

international and intergovernmental relations; Dr. Iyorwuese Hagher, high commissioner for the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Canada; Simon Nabukwesi, high commissioner for Kenya in Canada, and Mohau Pheko, high commissioner for the Republic of South Africa.

Keynote presentations will include "CIDA's Four Decades of Involvement in Africa: The Lessons," by Philip Baker, regional director, Southern and Eastern Africa Directorate, Canadian International Development Agency; "Africa's March Toward Sustained Growth and Development: Implications of the Economic Crisis," by Dr. Augustin K. Fosu, deputy director, World Institute for Development Economics Research, United Nations University, Helsinki, Finland; "The Sub-Saharan Business Environment Report: Business Information at a Ready Glance," by Dr. Anita Spring, emeritus professor, University of Florida, and "The Future of Africa is Today: Building Capacity for Sustained Economic Growth," by Dr. Sibry J.M. Tapsoba, head of the African Development Institute at the African Development Bank.

Special sessions and panels will include Changing Paradigm of Analysis of Foreign Direct Investment: Chinese Firms in Africa, co-chaired by Dr. William Wei, Grant MacEwan University and the Institute of Asia Pacific Studies, and Dr. Xiaohua Yang, University of San Francisco; The Future of Doctoral and Post-doctoral Business Education in Africa in an Era of Globalization, moderated by Dr. Simon Sigué, and Successful Canadian Business Experiences in Africa, chaired by Frank Kense, vice-president, Canadian Council on Africa.

KIAS Conference Promotes Undergraduate Student Research

Undergraduate students from around the world are invited to engage in scholarly work and creative activity with their peers at an Edmonton research conference in August.

The Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS) will host Tomorrow's Ideas, Now, an international, interdisciplinary undergraduate conference from August 17 to 20, the first conference of its kind to be held at the University of Alberta.

The conference will focus on three themes:

- stewardship of the planet
- place, belonging and otherness
- culture, media, technology

Social sciences, humanities and fine arts undergraduate students enrolled at accredited universities are encouraged to participate in the conference. Application forms and eligibility guidelines are available on the [KIAS website](#). Completed application forms and 300-word presentation abstracts must be submitted to kiasconference@gmail.com by 4 p.m. MDT on Monday, May 9, 2011.

For more information on this opportunity, see the full story in [Open AU](#).



Undergrads from across the country and from many disciplines will come together this summer at the University of Alberta. (Photo courtesy of the University of Alberta)

Research Funding Opportunities for AU Graduate Students

The next application deadline for AU's Graduate Student Research Fund (GSRF) is May 10.

The goal of GSRF is to enable students enrolled in graduate programs at AU to conduct research that:

- relates to the mission of AU as articulated in the university's mission statement or
- advances disciplinary knowledge.

The specific objectives of GSRF are to:

- support graduate student research projects that are judged to be of excellence;
- provide opportunities for the training of future researchers;
- assist in the communication of research results both within and beyond the academic community; and
- contribute to a research climate of excellence at Athabasca University.

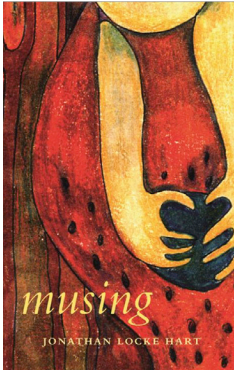
Research funds for graduate students

are available in two areas: the Graduate Student Mission Critical Research Fund and the Graduate Student Disciplinary Research Fund. Funds are also available for dissemination of quality research findings.

For more information on the Graduate Student Research Fund and other funding opportunities for graduate students, please visit the [Research Centre's Graduate Student Research Fund webpage](#).

News from AU Press

Spotlight on a New Release: *Musing*



Working within the framework of the sonnet form, Jonathan Locke Hart embarks on an extended meditation on our rootedness in landscape and in the past. The poems offer innovative variations on traditional themes and formal structures. Hart deftly combines his intimate knowledge of European culture and history with North American settings, producing poems that distill centuries of experience into a few brief, penetrating lines.

"These deeply thoughtful poems bring layered historical consciousness into the sonnet. They also touch and stir the heart through all its levels."

– Gordon Teskey, Harvard University

Poetry Month Contest

Have you visited the [AU Press Facebook](#) page this month? We are celebrating Poetry Month with a contest. All you have to do to enter is submit your favourite short poem by a great poet to [AU Press Marketing](#). The prize package will include all of the books in our [Mingling Voices series](#) and a few other great items. The contest closes on April 30. Don't miss your chance to win.



Award Nominations

AU Press is pleased to announce the following awards and nominations:

- *Accessible Elements: Teaching Science Online and at a Distance*, edited by Dietmar Kennepohl and Lawton Shaw, is winner of the 2010 Charles A. Wedemeyer Award from the University Continuing Education Association.

- *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, edited by Alvin Finkel, Sarah Carter and Peter Fortna, has been shortlisted for the 2010 Margaret McWilliams Award in Scholarly History.

- *Letters from the Lost: A Memoir of Discovery*, by Helen Waldstein Wilkes, has been selected as one of five finalists for the Alberta Reader's Choice Award.

Want more? Visit AU Press at www.aupress.ca or:





International Academy of
African Business and Development

Challenges in the Era of Globalization

May 17 - 20, 2011

Robbins Health Learning Centre
Edmonton, Alberta

Join over 200 scholars, grad students and professionals from around the world who are actively engaged in business and economic development issues as they relate to Africa.

Special sessions with eminent panelists and contributors, some of which include:

- ▶ Changing paradigm of analysis of foreign direct investment: Chinese firms in Africa
- ▶ Successful Canadian business experiences in Africa
- ▶ The future of doctoral and post-doctoral business education in Africa in an era of globalization

For more information visit our website:
<http://iaabd2011.athabascau.ca/index.php>

moodlemoot* 2011

May 1-5, 2011

Mayfield Inn,
Edmonton, Alberta

**Open Learning
Open Collaboration**

**Keynote speakers
Stephen Downes and
Martin Dougiamas**

Connect and share, virtually and in person, with practitioners, innovators, administrators, researchers and developers from across North America and throughout the world.

To register, please visit
<http://moodlemoot.ca/course/view.php?id=116>

For more information visit our website:
<http://moodlemoot.ca/>

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

Please send any information or photographs for inclusion to the [co-ordinator](#). If a photo opportunity presents itself, please contact [Blaise MacMullin](#). Due to FOIP regulations, a release form must accompany all photos. Please contact *The Insider* co-ordinator for a copy of the release form.

The next issue of *The Insider* will be published on Monday, May 9, 2011. The deadline for submissions is April 29.



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