

NAIT NUGGET

Wednesday, December 4, 2024
Volume 65, Issue 5

thenuggetonline.com
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Alberta is overdue for a minimum wage hike, but balance is crucial

Editorial by Hugo G. Diaz

In 2018, the Alberta provincial government would spark passionate reactions from different sectors after raising the minimum wage from \$12.20 to \$15—making it the highest in Canada at the time. Business associations would come out to criticize the measure while labour union representatives supported it. However, it has now been six years since that decision and the minimum wage has not changed at all. Is “the Alberta advantage” still a thing in 2024?

Our province has a particular feature. We only pay GST, whereas other provinces also have PST. Many think it is a relief to be taxed once while the rest of the provinces have more taxing acronyms messing with their citizens’ income. However, according to Canada’s Consumer Price Index, Albertans have been paying 0.3 per cent more for their consumption than the country’s average as of Sept. 1, 2024.

While the trend is moving downward, we are still only below British Columbia and Ontario, provinces that are known for their large populations and high prices. Even Quebec, which is the second-largest province by population, is below the national average of 1.6 per cent.

So what does that tell us? And is raising the minimum wage really a solution?

In six years, Alberta’s minimum wage has remained unchanged, making it one of the lowest in Canada in 2024 alongside Saskatchewan, who upped theirs to \$15 per hour in October. New Brunswick raised their minimum wage to \$15.30 in April. This has translated the initial acclaim of 2018 into unease as the effect of inflation has continued to increase living costs—yet this is not reflected in the money people are putting into their pockets for formal paid work.

For instance, earlier this year the Canadian government reformed the requirements for international students, increasing the Guaranteed Investment Certificate (GIC) required to cover student expenses from \$10,000 to \$20,635 in an attempt to bring it in line with current living costs. This reflects the inflation we see in our budgets and wallets.

I believe that increasing the minimum wage is long overdue, however, we need to analyse each of the scenarios this could lead to for the increase to positively impact regular citizens and small businesses trying to make their way in our province. It also needs to be gradual. The laws of supply and demand should be regulated so the final price is not always passed on to the final consumer or affect the costs of production and services, which can take small businesses out of the market.

Table 2: Minimum Wage on January 1, 2022; January 1, 2023; and January 1, 2024

Province	January 1, 2022	January 1, 2023	January 1, 2024
Alberta	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00
Ontario	\$14.35	\$15.50	\$16.55
British Columbia	\$15.20	\$15.65	\$16.75
Northwest Territories	\$15.20	\$15.20	\$16.05
Nunavut	\$16.00	\$16.00	\$19.00
Quebec	\$13.50	\$14.25	\$15.25
Prince Edward Island	\$13.00	\$14.50	\$15.00
Manitoba	\$11.90	\$13.50	\$15.30
Nova Scotia	\$12.95	\$13.60	\$15.00
New Brunswick	\$11.75	\$13.75	\$14.75
Yukon	\$15.20	\$15.70	\$16.77
Saskatchewan	\$11.45	\$13.00	\$14.00
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$12.75	\$13.70	\$15.00

Changes in minimum wage across Canada from Jan. 1 2022 - Jan. 1, 2024.

Table via Government of Canada

Increasing the minimum wage would generate higher income for individuals and households and therefore higher consumption. This, in time, will cause excessive demand and increase the costs of products and services. We would eventually be in the same vicious circle as before, with higher levels of inflation as an added bonus.

A clear example of this is housing and rental prices. Migration to Alberta, especially to Calgary and Edmonton, has increased rental prices substantially, causing many to live in groups or opt for something smaller in order to afford it—“legal basement” has become a common phrase on rental websites. The percentage increase in rent from one year to the next has been left to the discretion of landlords. Not only are they charging more, but they have caught on to this trend. It is no coincidence that many new homes are being built in areas known for their density due to universities and colleges in the vicinity.

Where once there was only one house, now there are two, with two “legal basements.” Who regulates this? How would the price of these rentals be affected if people could earn higher incomes? Wouldn’t it become unsustainable again after some time?

Raising the minimum wage in Alberta is a necessity, but it is also true that regulations must be put in place so rising wages do not cause the cost of other basic necessities to spiral out of control and have the opposite effect intended. Ultimately, raising wages is not a question that can be taken lightly. It requires thoughtfulness and planning to implement changes that primarily benefit citizens, but also allow economic development through healthy, non-predatory business growth practices.

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NAIT and NASA bargaining: How students may be impacted

By Amy St. Amand

NAIT and one of its unions, the NAIT Academic Staff Association (NASA) are in collective bargaining, and both sides have several proposals. We've gone through both sides, read all the updates, and broken down two proposals that could directly affect students.

Classroom sizes

NAIT wants to make it easier and less expensive to increase class sizes. NASA wants the opposite.

The details: As stated in the current collective agreement, "a full-time instructor's salary is based on 1885 hours per academic year." Those hours are broken down into six categories of responsibilities, including Scheduled Instruction Hours (SIH)—a period of 60 minutes where an instructor delivers "either curriculum or hands-on skills instruction" online, or in-person. In other words, the hours that an instructor spends teaching are their Scheduled Instruction Hours. These hours are capped based on the type of program.

However, an instructor can get additional SIHs based on the size of their class, because "both parties recognize that class size impacts and instructor's workload." To calculate when an instructor would earn additional SIHs, NAIT uses a formula that considers the number of students in a course.

$$\text{Additional SIHs} = \frac{(\text{CSF} - 17,000)}{83}$$

Where;

Class Size Factor (CSF) = Number of students at the course drop deadline x SIHs delivered.

In simple terms, if an instructor is teaching multiple courses with many students, they are more likely to earn additional SIHs, which means more compensation for that instructor. And, if an instructor's SIHs are higher than what they should be at the end of the year, those additional hours will be paid at three times their hourly rate. So having more students in a class can be costly for NAIT, not to mention the extra work for instructors.

However, NAIT and NASA do not agree on what changes should be made to the CSF. NAIT has proposed to increase the threshold for additional hours from 17,000 to 20,000. In NAIT's summary of their bargaining proposals from Aug. 1, it says the change "better reflect[s] the supports that now are available to instructors, inside and outside of the classroom when they have larger class sizes." But according to NASA, increasing the CSF could mean "larger classes resulting in instructors having more students and less time per student."

And in their proposal, they decreased the CSF to 12,500 instead of 17,000. In one of their bargaining updates posted on their website, they argued that by lowering the CSF, it's more expensive for NAIT to run large classes, "so it would likely keep class sizes smaller."

Why it matters: Well, depending on what happens, class sizes could either get bigger or smaller. And class size can have a direct impact on instructor morale, ability to teach, etc. It's not a guarantee that if the CSF goes up that class sizes will also increase, but it would pave the way to make it easier and less expensive for NAIT to do so.

Ratio of counsellors to students and counsellor workload

NASA wants to create a ratio for how many counsellors NAIT has compared to how many students are enrolled. They also proposed guidelines for counsellor's workload, including how many students they should reasonably see each week and when they'll get paid more if their workload exceeds the target.

The details: Currently, there is nothing in the collective agreement about the ratio of counsellors to students at NAIT.

NASA has proposed a ratio of "1 full-time equivalent counsellor to every 1,250 full-time learner students at NAIT." Their reasoning has to do with the growing student population and mental health crises; currently, there is "no guarantee

for more counsellors to be hired and provide the increased support a growing student population requires."

They've also proposed the following weekly workload:

I.01 Counsellors shall have workload thresholds based on the following weekly measures:

a) 15 (fifteen) sessions from recurring student-patients.

b) 5 (five) emergency sessions.

c) An overall clinical load of 30 (thirty) recurring student-patients.

If an instructor were to go over the proposed threshold, they'd be entitled to overload pay, "calculated as the percentage of student patients over the maximum number of student patients."

Currently, NAIT counsellors see five patients a day, according to Lead Student Counsellor Tanya Spencer. "We are very mindful of the intensity of our work, and we definitely keep tabs on it," she explained. As of writing, there are six counsellors under Spencer's leadership along with one Spiritual Care Provider and one volunteer Chaplain. Spencer is also happy with the average wait times at NAIT's clinic, which have never risen above two weeks for a conventional appointment.

Why it matters: If the proposal is accepted, it could mean that there are more counsellors available for students as enrollment increases. But it also could mean that there are less counsellors when enrollment drops, and the proposal doesn't state what would happen when the number needs to be reduced—would they get laid off, fired or moved elsewhere? It's not clear.

Ultimately, a ratio could be good for students because NAIT would have to hire more counsellors as the full-time student population gets bigger, but it could potentially be expensive with having to hire or fire new counsellors each year. The proposal also doesn't address the growth of other demographics of students; if part-time study exponentially grows, that wouldn't change the ratio of counsellors according to the current version of the formula, despite still having more students on campus that may require care.

And while Spencer would "always welcome" more staff, she also hopes any formula dictating the workload of counsellors to "be free of unintended consequences."

"It's not ethical to leave students in the lurch because a formula is calculated [and] all of a sudden, we are beholden to a lower staffing level," Spencer explained. "Any proposal that either NAIT or NASA puts forward, I would strongly encourage them to leave the provisions so that we can provide responsible care to the students."

However, Spencer emphasized that regardless of the specific workload directed by a formula, if someone needs help, the counsellors are obligated to make sure students get help.

"My license says that if I am aware of an emergency situation, I must attend ... so if there's anything in the collective agreement, regardless of which party proposes it, that we can't abide by professionally, then we will have to ignore it."

What now?

Bargaining is still ongoing. A Nov. 5 statement from Jodi Edmonds, Director of Employee and Labour Relations for NAIT, said that "NAIT and NASA will be at the bargaining table for a total of 30 hours between now [Nov. 5] and December 15," so there's still lots of negotiation to be had. Edmonds' statement also highlighted that NAIT is "committed to timely and respectful bargaining that doesn't impact student learning."

And while two proposals have been highlighted here, these aren't the only ones that could have an impact on students. Interested students can find both parties' proposals publicly available on nasafaculty.ca/bargaining-updates.

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NAIT chosen to lead Canadian junior culinary team



Photo via NAIT Content Collective

By Amy St. Amand

NAIT's reputation and success at international culinary competitions has granted them a new opportunity: selecting and training the country's national junior culinary team for the next four years.

This team of aspiring chefs, all 25 and under, will compete at events like the Culinary World Cup in 2026 and the IKA Culinary Olympics in 2028. Three NAIT instructors will be leading the team: Troy Lymburner, Nigel Webber and Enrico Caparas.

The team of coaches will have big shoes to fill. At the 2024 IKA Culinary Olympics, Canada's junior team earned silver in both their challenges: the 'Restaurant of Nations,' where each team cooked a three-course menu for 50+ guests, and the 'Junior Chef's Table,' in which teams cooked "half a dozen dishes, at a large table in front of the competition kitchens." In 2020, the team took home two gold medals and earned fourth in the world.

But NAIT's coaching team comes with decades of experience. Lymburner competed as a student and has been coaching NAIT teams for over 20 years. He was also one of the coaches—along with Caparas and Christopher Short—for the NAIT Culinary team's latest trip to Stuttgart, Germany, to compete at the 2024 IKA Culinary Olympics. The all-female team took away a silver medal in the Community Catering category.

The recruitment process has already begun, and once the team is chosen, they'll get right to work preparing for their trip to Luxembourg for the Culinary World Cup in 2026. While the junior team's ultimate goal is to compete at international competitions and represent Canada, the opportunity will also help them prepare for their future careers. "Whether or not students end up on the podium, the experience prepares them for rewarding careers and contributes to a stronger culinary community locally and across Canada," said Dennis

Sheppard, Dean of the JR Shaw School of Business.

The National Culinary Federation selected NAIT because of its "success at international culinary competitions ... and its reputation as a leader in the culinary arts," said a press release from Nov. 26. NAIT has a long history of competing in culinary competitions; in addition to competing in Germany in 2024, 2020 and 2012, the NAIT Culinary Team has competed in Dubai (2018), Hong Kong (2017) and Singapore (2014).



NAIT's 2024 Culinary team (pictured above) won a silver medal at the IKA Culinary Olympics. Canada's junior culinary team will compete at the same event in 2026.

Photo via NAIT Content Collective

Winter: Expectation versus reality

Editorial by Noura Eltinay

I used to consider 20 C chilly two years ago. That shouldn't come as a surprise—for 12 years, I lived in Sudan, a country where summers can reach boiling temperatures of 50 C in the middle of July. I question how I survived those scorching temperatures, considering how much I hate heat.

I always knew I would move to Canada for my post-secondary studies, and one of the things I looked forward to the most was winter. I tend to romanticize experiences that are the opposite of my current reality, and Pinterest did not help with that. All those winter pictures on my feed emphasized small houses and evergreen trees adorned with glowing Christmas lights and blanketed in pure white, fluffy snow. Seeing photos of snowflakes falling against a warm-toned sky made me imagine staring into the clouds with curious eyes and rosy cheeks as the first snowfall descended on my hair.

When I moved to Calgary last year, I realized Pinterest left out a couple of key details about winter. Firstly, why did no one warn me about icy sidewalks? As a public transit user, I walk outdoors a lot. I don't think much of it until it's winter, and I'm hyper aware of every step I take on invisible ice, feeling my heart skip a beat when my foot wobbles over the slippery surface.

"Oh. My. God. Another close call," I think to myself. I've already slipped more times than I can count.

I know this sounds questionable, but it also didn't occur to me how truly freezing winter is. It is the number one warning everyone who has experienced winter tells you, but wow. I found myself huddled up in a big coat, wearing two pairs of gloves, which I disliked wearing. I had to take them off to use my phone outdoors and risk my fingers to the possibility of frostbite. I was paranoid that my monthly transit pass would slip from my numb fingers in the chilling winter wind. And because it was so thin compared to my layers of winter gear, I wouldn't have noticed if it did fly away.

Doing basic outdoor chores also became more tedious in the middle of winter, like taking out the trash. During summer, I could just grab the trash bag and head right out, throw it in the bin and roll it to the street with ease for the garbage truck to pick up. But during winter, I had to mentally prepare myself for the cold. I would throw on my coat, my boots and maybe my gloves depending on how long I was going to spend out there. Sometimes I'd ditch the



A winter in Calgary.

Photo supplied

gloves because "it's only two minutes," then proceed to grab the trash bag, head out and struggle to open the ice-sealed bin with my bare hands. Plus, pushing the bin into the snow-filled street turns this entire process into a cardio HIIT session.

And my uncle told me this was a mild winter.

I wouldn't say my entire winter experience was so full of awful inconveniences, though. I did have some of those moments I imagined myself having, like admiring the houses adorned in colourful Christmas lights. I enjoyed cozy mornings with a nice cup of hot chocolate, attended a Christmas party at the Calgary Zoo, went sledding with my little sister and took Pinterest-worthy photos of those snowy days.

This year, I want to romanticize winter while confronting the challenges that come with it. After all, winter is the longest season in Alberta. I don't plan on being miserable for a big portion of the year, and you shouldn't either. You can combat the cold and dark with the good things that come with winter, like holiday spirit, winter break, hot chocolate, cozy sweaters, winter sports and so much more. Like most things in life, you need to look for the positives. If you let the negatives cloud your vision, it'll be difficult to embrace the beauty of winter that others—like myself, at one point—yearn to experience.

Surviving the holidays, on a budget

By Matthew van Erp

The holiday season is upon us once more, and if you are like me, you want to start thinking about gifts to get your friends and family. However, also like me, you do not want to destroy your bank account or rack up that new credit card you just got. Here are some tips for getting through the holidays on a student budget.

Money is not your only currency

Buying some new or impressive gift is wonderful, but it might cost a lot of money—money you might not have. But gifts are not just monetary. 2 other currencies you can use are your time and your expertise. Use your time to do activities and be with your friends and family. Make memories of the season that will last well beyond the breaks. Use your skills to make them even more special. Are you good at baking? A dozen cookies will make anyone feel better. Or are you good at taking photos? Make a holiday photo item for them to enjoy for years to come.

Up-cycling gifts

I like leather jackets. There is something about the feel, smell and sound they make when I wear them that is very pleasing. The best part is all but one of my jackets are from a second-hand store and cost less than \$50 each. Impressive gifts do not always mean new. Finding a gem that others have discarded and doing a quick repair—or even better, a personalized modification—for that loved one in your life can be more precious than an item picked up brand new or ordered online.

Navigating meal expenses

Holiday meals are also a huge expense during the season. Going out to fancy restaurants or meeting others for a quick beverage can add up in cost quickly. Instead of going out for family dinners, plan a potluck or meal at home. A potluck is a family-style meal where everyone brings an item of food to share. The hardest part of a potluck is planning it, but as a college student, managing schedules, planning and completing tasks are all things you are probably very used to. The holidays are also an enjoyable time to stock up on food items for the home. Always keep an eye out for case sales and promotional sales.

Treat holiday savings as an accomplishment

I create a holiday eating monetary limit for the holiday weeks and do my best to stay in it. You can also set limits on things like gifts or entertainment. If I go over the limit, then I take it from the following week. If I am under, I save it in another account (or jar) and do not spend it. These are funds managed well, and you should be proud to have them saved.

Lastly, remember that it is the holiday season. It is a stressful time, but it's also a time to relax and recharge before returning in January. The one budget we do not normally talk about is a budget for burnout. If the value of purchasing a gift or attending an expensive event is a cost to your emotional peace, always pay yourself first and keep your peace of mind.

Happy holidays, and remember—you can do this!



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Surviving an Alberta winter from someone who braved the coldest of colds

Editorial by Matthew van Erp

Cold, snowy winters are a universal experience for Edmontonians, and if you've lived here for a while, you've probably learned some skills to deal with the cold. So, who am I to be writing an article on coping with winter? My knowledge of managing the cold is due to training and experience beyond our city—mostly bad experiences.

From being stuck on top of Mount Gola in 12 feet of snow, or in the Québec ice storms a few years ago, to a late night walk in -50 C temperature or enjoying the Northern Lights from Yellowknife city, I have learned to deal with the cold in several ways. Here are my top winter survival tips I have learned over the years.

The art of layering

The best way to protect yourself from the weather is with a layering system. The easiest way to approach this is to remember: sweat, warm, wet. The goal is to trap in heat and keep yourself from getting wet. Moisture will allow heat to escape from your body and must be prevented. Starting inside out, the first layer is your sweat layer. This is closest to the skin and needs to wick moisture away. This layer should be replaced as needed throughout the day (i.e. bring extra t-shirts and socks). The second layer is your insulation layer, used to trap warm air between your

body and the outer side. It consists of sweaters, fleece and woolen clothes. It can be a single item or several, but should not be too tight to allow airflow.

The final layer prevents wind and rain from getting to your insulation layer. These layers can be mixed up as needed; you don't always need an outer layer if it is dry outside or an extra underlayer if you won't be outside long. Don't forget about your toques, mittens and scarves.

Braving winter roads

I travel a lot, and I don't allow the weather to stop me. However, I like to be prepared in case there is a mishap, especially in the winter. If you have a vehicle or travel in a vehicle, it is important to be prepared for cold weather if you break down or are stuck in traffic. Keep a few blankets and some small (freeze-resistant) snacks to eat in the vehicle, like nuts or beef jerky.

Store a pair of booster cables in case your battery loses its charge and a block heater cord (as these have a habit of going missing). Prepare your vehicle for the weather by equipping snow tires, using washer fluid that can manage the negative temperature and ensuring other tune-ups are updated.

Indoor immunity

Ah, winter time. Imagine sitting in the house with a warm beverage, watching Netflix and then the power goes off. This can happen often during our Alberta cold snaps with excessive power consumption for heating or winter storms cutting off electrical services.

Prepare for these situations with a home emergency kit that can last a couple of days. Stock up on foods that can be consumed without preparation and ensure you have warm blankets and an extra layer of clothing available. Also, if your place allows it, safely using candles can help provide enough heat to prevent a person from freezing. It sounds hard to believe, but I've used a single candle in a snow cave and stayed warm overnight.

Lastly, have a means to charge your phone for emergency calls and if possible, an AM/FM radio to tune into emergency radio stations, which have their own backup power supply.

Even with all this, winter is a time to be enjoyed. Things like going sledding or building a snowman make winter wonderful. With a prepared mindset and available tools, you will not only be able to survive the weather but even enjoy it by staying comfy and warm all season long.

Just the essentials: A guide to winter clothing for newcomers

By Rafael Luis Flores

Forget “winter is coming.” Winter is here. Hoodies will give way to puffer jackets, which in turn will give way to bulky parkas. A sizable portion of the NAIT population will, for the first time, be dealing with a harsh and unfamiliar season. So, here is a winter clothing and shopping guide for newcomers in Canada.

The best sale deals are never during winter

First, a reality check: if you are a discount hunter looking to strike gold on branded winter clothes, you are either too late or too early. You can typically find the best deals during the post-season sales and to a lesser extent, the pre-season ones.

But, do not be discouraged. There still are sales. Certain stores, like Marshalls in the Kingsway Mall nearby and its sister store Winners, have extensive racks of marked-down parkas, coats and jackets of reputable brands all-year round. These are likely “new old stock,” but they are still in good condition. Closer to home, you can check out the NAIT-branded outerwear being sold at shop AT NAIT.

Now, if you are cash-strapped and looking for rock-bottom prices, there are thrift stores in Edmonton such as Value Village, where second-hand apparel can be purchased. It may or may not be fashionable, but it will keep you warm.

Functionality trumps aesthetics

Edmonton winters can be brutal. You will soon learn how the mundane act of waiting at the bus stop for five minutes suddenly becomes a life-threatening experience in -30 C weather. Under these circumstances, you do not need a stylish winter coat that will make you look good on Instagram. You need one that will literally keep you alive.

For your first winter here, you will want a parka—a type of hooded jacket that extends to the lower hips or thighs. Parkas are padded with insulation, but they’re better if you can find one that has an inner lining of fleece for comfort. This will feel bulky and will probably limit your range of movement, but when you need to go outside, you’ll be prepared for the freezing temperatures.

Coats with similar layers would also be a smart purchase. But what sets parkas apart are their hoods, which significantly increase warmth to the head area, especially during windy conditions.

There are those that think you should not skimp on parkas and coats. Premium quality ones may be expensive, but they can potentially last for decades. And coats with classic designs never really go out of style. So, if you can afford it, splurge.

Inner layers are equally important

Numerous winter clothing guides are silent on thermal underwear. Time to change that. Thermal underwear acts as an important skin-tight base layer that traps body heat in while wicking perspiration away from the skin to keep a constant temperature. Do not skip this. For a budget-friendly option, check out UNIQLO’s HEATTECH product line.

As for the middle layers, it is normal for anyone to have at least three upper garment layers underneath their parka by the time winter is at its coldest. The typical layering sequence would be as follows: upper thermal underwear, a long-sleeved shirt or two and a wool sweater or fleece jacket.

Unpopular view: Winter boots are not essential (for students)

There is no denying that winter boots keep your feet warm and comfortable. But, you can get this same benefit from ordinary shoes when partnered with thermal socks. Unless you plan to spend a significant amount of time outdoors, you can skip this. In fact, when January comes, you may observe that many people at NAIT just wear sneakers.

And yes, thermal socks are a crucial purchase. Merino wool is best but tends to be pricey. Acrylic is cheaper and will do the job just as well.

Accessories: What to keep, what to skip

In winter, you will often find yourself needing to use your phone outdoors. This can be challenging when you are wearing gloves, so make sure to buy a pair that allows touchscreen use.

Headwear is essential too. But between hats and toques, the latter has more advantages. Toques are warmer, have better head coverage and are more comfortable. You can also pull them over your ears, making earmuffs unnecessary (so yes, skip earmuffs).

Scarves might seem like a vain stylish accessory, but any winter veteran will swear by their utility. They provide an added snugness around the neck and can also be adjusted to cover the lower face during particularly frigid days.

If you are coming from somewhere with mild winters or no winter at all, you will likely have a much lower tolerance towards freezing temperatures than most. Prioritize warmth and comfort over style and adjust at your own pace to enjoy the winter ahead. In no time, you’ll be feeling like the King (or Queen) in the North!



Art by Komal Koshti, @komal.koshti

Men's soccer journeys through playoffs and nationals

By Geono Aloisio

It's been quite the season for the men's soccer team. At the end of October, they won their first Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC) championships since 2018/19. Their win qualified the team for nationals, and while they weren't able to secure another title, it was still a season to remember. Here's everything you need to know about their journey through playoffs and nationals.

Heading into playoffs, the Oaks secured a solid record of nine wins, one loss and two ties. Their success earned them the first seed in the North Division and a bye through the quarter-finals. Their first opponent was SAIT, who won their quarter-finals game against Northwestern Polytechnic.

The blue and gold struck first courtesy of captain and back-to-back ACAC North Player of the Year, Peter Jones, to put the team up 1-0 20 minutes into the half. But SAIT responded in the 40th and 85th minute to take a 2-1 lead late in the game. The moment was "heartbreaking" for Head Coach Jeff Paulus. "The visions of the season were going through my head, thinking that these boys have worked so hard all year ... and it's a real shame if it ends like this for them," he said.

But it wasn't over yet. Two minutes into extra time, NAIT's Lungelo Napa put the ball past the Trojans goalie to send the game into overtime.

With a trip to the gold medal game on the line, NAIT's Jameson Kiezik sealed the win in the 102nd minute and sent the Oaks to the ACAC Championship game for the third consecutive year. The blue and gold's comeback was a special moment for the program; this win meant the Oaks would face off against the Keyano College Huskies in a rematch from last year's finals.

"The emotions that you go through as a coach, from being just absolutely gutted for the players because you know how much they've given to the program. And to think it's over, only to see that [the comeback] happen ... it was a special moment," Paulus shared. "It's probably my most favourite moment in all my years of football, and that moment is always going to stand out to me."

The team now had one final obstacle: overcoming the Huskies and completing the payback for last season.

The match was tightly contested, and neither team gained any traction on offence. NAIT and Keyano combined for nine shots on goal through 90 minutes, and the game headed to overtime tied 0-0. The team to lead at the end of 30 minutes would win the title.

In the pressure of the moment with the championship on the line, the Oaks scored twice in overtime to secure the win and qualify for nationals—the first time since their previous ACAC Championship win in 2018/19.

"I felt that [last year] I let the team down a little bit with some of my coaching decisions late in the game. We were up 2-0, and I wish I would have had a different halftime speech," Paulus said. "So when we finally got it, it was just a relief that these boys, who I really believe deserve it, they weren't hindered by their coach. So the relief was phenomenal."

With the men's team advancing past the conference championship, the group was locked in for the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) National Championships in Fredericton.

2024 marked the program's first time returning to nationals since 2021/22, where they finished with bronze. The Oaks have won the national championship twice—1987 and 2011—and the expectation heading into the tournament was that NAIT would add a third.

"Our expectation is to win," a confident Paulus stated before the team headed to Fredericton. "The program has been successful at winning ever since I first came to the program back as an Assistant Coach in 2004."

"We have a very deep, talented roster and this team is every bit as good as my 2011 team that won nationals. So yeah, 'Why not us?' is kind of our attitude."



#6, Luiz (Alex) Arreaza runs with the ball in NAIT's game against Saint-Lambert at the CCAA nationals. Photo via CCAA, SRMPhotography

Despite the team's confidence, the win wasn't meant to be. Nationals started out strong, and the Oaks got a shutout against Les Rouges de Saint-Boniface with a goal from Kiezik 42 minutes in. In the semi-finals, the Oaks fell 3-0 to the number one ranked team in the CCAA, sending them to the bronze medal semi-final against the Champlain Saint-Lambert Cavaliers. A win would have locked NAIT into the bronze medal match, but ultimately, the team didn't "play to [their] potential." The team led 2-1 at halftime, but a late game tie-up gave the Cavaliers the opportunity to steal the win with a goal at 87 minutes. The Oaks couldn't recover, and the Cavaliers defeated them 4-3.

"I think the general sense amongst the whole team is probably unsatisfied ... we felt that there was a bronze medal to be won, and we didn't get there. So yeah, we're disappointed in that," Paulus said in an interview after the game.

"We gave up seven goals in two games [at the tournament] and we only gave up nine in 12 regular season games ... I felt that we were very competitive [against Champlain], and we could get a result in the game. I think the players would all say the same, but for whatever reason, we didn't."

Despite the disappointing performance of the nationals, Paulus is confident it won't be long before the Oaks are back.

"We're a young team," said Paulus. "16 of our 22 players are first and second-year players, so if we can get the same group back and add the five new players we've recruited to the program ... we feel very good about our chances of getting back here next year."

Men's volleyball team defend historic title, look to future

Words by Geono Aloisio

Photo via NAIT Looks

Fresh off a national championship win, the men's volleyball program has become one of the most exciting teams in the NAIT sports scene. Coming into this season, the Looks are poised to be contenders on the provincial and national stage once again.

However, the men's volleyball program wasn't always so successful. Their last Alberta Colleges Athletic Association (ACAC) title was in 1977, making it nearly 50 years without a title.

But that all changed last year, when the Looks hired Phil Dixon as the new Head Coach in August 2023. Under Dixon's leadership, the Looks broke a 47-year drought and won the ACAC Championship before securing their first Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA) National Championships in program history.

Now, the team is in uncharted territory and entering this season as the defending national champions and must face a new challenge: holding onto their title.

Focusing on the road ahead

Although the Looks' latest recruiting class may not be considered "historic," like their last one, the program added some great pieces. 10 new recruits will help bolster their chances of competing for a national championship again.

Despite the additions, the Looks were not off to a hot start to their title defence; NAIT dropped both games to the number two ranked in the country, the Keyano College Huskies. But the reigning champions have slowly started building their way and currently sit at 5 wins and 4 losses.

Early struggles with integrating new players into the lineup are to be expected. However, Head Coach Phil Dixon believes the Looks are "where they need to be at this point" and that things will turn around in time.

"I think it sounds crazy to say, but we're actually a bigger team than we were last year," Dixon said. "So I think we got the pieces to the puzzle; it's just a matter of us coaches figuring out what place to put the pieces together."

The team lost several key pieces, including their top two kill leaders, but the

second-year star Josh Watson and new signings Xander van Driel and Julien Philips are stepping up. The trio lead the Looks in kills with 101, 99 and 70 through nine games this season.

The entire roster is pulling their weight; as of publication, the Looks sit third in their division, with 427 kills through nine games. They are on track to finish above the 823 they achieved in 19 games last season, and the blue and gold are showing signs that they will continue their dominance from 2023/24.

The price of being champions

The Looks' opponents will use their games against NAIT as a measuring stick for where the team holds up in the conference, but they'll also bring their best performance to go against the reigning national champions—something the team has embraced.

"We told the guys, everyone is going to have a chip on their shoulder ... we not only have a target on our back but our front as well," Dixon explained. "So we need to be prepared more than ever this year to bring our best to every game ... it's on the players, coaches, all of us to bring our A-game every day."

While the team is still focused on repeating on the provincial and national stage, there is a larger goal on the team's mind: building a legacy. The first step of breaking through to the national stage and capturing their first national championship is behind them, and the potential next golden age of men's volleyball is just beyond the horizon.

"We know we're capable of [winning a national championship] because we've already done it ... what we're trying to build into these guys here is that this isn't just about this year or last year; it's about the years to come," said Dixon. "It's about standing on the shoulders of our giants that got us to that spot last year, which has helped with recruiting and putting those pieces of the puzzle together so that we can attract some good talent going forward to where this is a destination place for great schooling and great athletics."

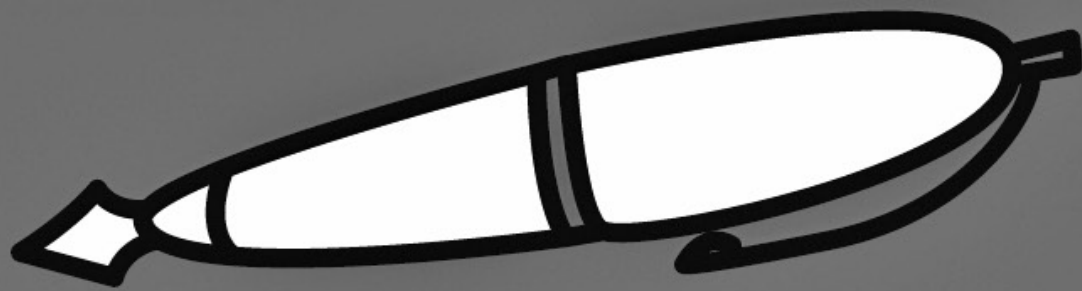
"That's what I'm trying to build here. A legacy for NAIT on the sporting side."





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The power of paying it forward

Editorial by Danielle Libunao

Have you ever heard the phrase ‘pay it forward?’ In a world that can often feel harsh and unforgiving, kindness is a gift we can all share to make things slightly better. When I show kindness to others, I believe it’s more than being nice; it’s my way of offering a gentle pause from the rush of life. Kindness can take many forms: a smile, a thoughtful word or a simple gesture. These small actions can create a ripple effect that brightens someone’s day, reminding them that goodness still exists in the world. It might seem small to others, but to me, it’s like the cherry on top of life’s sundae—something we didn’t realize we needed until we received it.

What’s beautiful about kindness is that it’s contagious, like planting seeds that grow into something larger than ourselves. When I help others, it feels like I’m nurturing a world where compassion can thrive. And as others witness these acts, I hope they feel inspired to pay that kindness forward too. Each small act has the potential to blossom into a chain of positive actions, like spreading light through the dark. It’s a way to help create a more caring and connected world. This mindset helps me focus less on the negatives and more on the good around me. And when I’m feeling down, those moments of kindness can be

exactly what I need to lift my spirits.

However, kindness isn’t always easy to express or understand. People interpret it in their own ways, and even their personal experiences, emotions and cultural backgrounds can influence how kindness is perceived. Sometimes even when we have genuine intentions, misunderstandings can happen. There are times when kindness can also be mistaken for weakness or taken for granted. Over the years, I’ve learned that being kind also means being kind to myself, knowing when to set boundaries and not letting my generosity be taken advantage of. True kindness is more than just giving, but also knowing when to say no—and that’s okay. It’s about lifting others up, but should never come at the cost of my own well-being.

When we choose to be kind, it becomes more than a casual gesture. It turns into a habit that can influence others, one act at a time. By sharing my thoughts on kindness through the phrase ‘pay it forward’ I hope to inspire others to make kindness part of their daily lives. Much like Wayne Gretzky’s saying “you miss 100 per cent of the shots you don’t take,” if we don’t take the chance to spread kindness, we miss the opportunity to make a difference.

Hacking holiday health

By Matthew van Erp

With the upcoming holiday break, the excitement of valuable family time and the relief of the semester ending, one might feel that it is a good time to take a break from physical activities. Who has 40 minutes to do a full workout when there are Christmas cookies to be made (and eaten)? However, this lack of activity can have a negative impact when you return to school and start a fresh class schedule.

Here are some small tips to help you keep your fitness in top form without compromising your holiday joy.

Challenge yourself with short-term goals

While you are in class, you have short-term goals to complete, projects to finish or an exam to prepare for. Short-term fitness goals are similar. They can be as simple as not losing your fitness gain, beating a personal record or completing a number-based goal. By keeping it simple and achievable, this small success will drive you toward even more successes.

Build endurance with micro workouts

These can be completed throughout the day and work around your holiday schedule. One type of micro workout is Tabata: a five-minute high-intensity routine consisting of 20 seconds of activity and 10 seconds of rest for eight rounds. Aim for three sessions throughout the day, but be flexible to adjust as needed depending on how your body feels. You could space them further

apart, chain several together, focus on a body part or do a whole-body grind.

Work your muscles with equipment

There are two simple solutions while you are away from NAIT and its well-equipped gym. One is to focus on body weight exercises, focusing more on body function working using compounding muscle groups. The second option is to acquire some equipment. Resistance bands are effective because they create progressive resistance, increasing and changing as you move, allowing all your muscles to be constantly engaging. They are cheap to acquire (check out the dollar store) and easy to pack when travelling. Having several allows you to double up for more resistance or use a lighter resistance if needed.

Finally, just have fun

I have always disliked the term “working out.” Working is a job, a chore, something that can be put off. Training for a goal can be fun, a challenge and something to enjoy. Also, this is the holiday season—a time to play and relax. It is also a time to let go of some stress, recover from the long hours of studying and recover from the last semester. While stress can be a good thing for fitness, too much mental and emotional stress will have a negative impact on your goals. Take the time this season to have fun and play. Physical activity doesn’t always need structure—go make a snowman, take a cold walk to watch the Northern Lights or maybe have a snowball battle royal.



Image via Freepik

4 holiday drinks to get you in the spirit

Photos and recipes by Skylar Boissonault

'Tis the season for cocktails! Level up your gatherings with these easy but delicious drinks. You'll find some classics with some twists, as well as some new imaginings. There's even a mocktail for the non-drinkers!

The holidays can get rowdy, and you might not want to make complicated cocktails when you're mid-party, so these drinks are simple. Use a shaker, or if you don't have one, a mason jar works perfectly. Make sure to stay on the nice list and drink responsibly. Happy cocktailing!

Run Run Rudolph

I love having a drink, but sometimes I'm the driver and I still want to get involved with the festivities. So this is my go to mocktail for Christmas time.



Ingredients

- 2 oz cranberry juice
- 1 oz orange
- 0.5 oz honey syrup
- Top with ginger ale

Instructions

For the syrup, simply dissolve equal parts honey in water. If you want a light kick, which I highly recommend, use hot honey or simmer chili flakes in your syrup. I promise it's not that spicy. Shake the first three ingredients together and top it off with the ginger ale. Garnish with frozen cranberries and rosemary—use icing sugar to make it look frosted!

Frostbite Bliss

When it's a little cold and you need something to warm you up, this super easy shot is sure to have your tastebuds firing. Think of a classic peppermint patty candy in liquid form and bam! You have a Frostbite Bliss.



This recipe makes two shots but feel free to double as needed! Pro tip: make sure to garnish your shot glasses before pouring. I made a thick icing with icing sugar and the mint chocolate cream, but feel free to use normal cream or milk.

Ingredients

- 1 oz peppermint schnapps
- 1 oz mint chocolate cream

Instructions

Dip the rim of the glass into your icing and roll it in a plate of crushed candy canes. To make the shot, shake the ingredients with ice and pour into your rimmed glasses.

Holly Jolly Nog

How can you say no to a classic eggnog? The Holly Jolly Nog is an easy one serving version of this iconic holiday drink. Any cream liquor will work, but I



love using gingerbread cream over all others.

And don't skip the nutmeg! Fresh grated will make this drink beautiful, but using ground will still work.

Ingredients

- Whole egg
- 1.5 oz cream liqueurs
- 1 oz spiced rum
- Fresh grated nutmeg

Instructions

Take all your ingredients and shake together with ice until cold and combined.

Strain into a glass and garnish with whipped cream, nutmeg, and my favourite part, a gingerbread man!

Merry Mimosa

One of my favourite family traditions is drinking mimosas with the whole family on Christmas morning. This is also great for friendsmas the next morning.



But don't worry, I'm looking out for you with this super simple drink. It's a merry upgrade to the classic mimosa. The tartness of the cranberry moonshine pairs so nicely with the sweet orange. And who doesn't like bubbles?

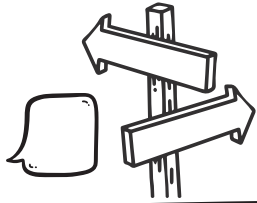
Ingredients

- 1 oz mulled cranberry moonshine
- 3 oz orange juice
- Top with prosecco

Instructions

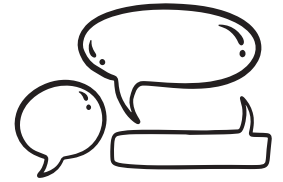
This drink is classy, and the best part is you can build it right in your glass. No shaking required!

To garnish, use three frozen cranberries on a skewer on the top, and feel free to dip them into your drink to add more cranberry flavour.



CLUBS CORNER

December isn't the end



By Sanjiyven Alfred Joseph

Students are in a fix. Some want to fling the books away and embrace the excitement that comes with the end of a semester. Others know the alarm bells are getting louder with the wave of assignments and exams that the end of a term brings. Well, the glass is either half full or half empty, and the end of the semester isn't always a bad thing.

An end brings a new beginning, and the same is true for the end of another semester of club activity—November is where club activity “really starts chugging along,” said Claudia Basic, NAITSA Campus Clubs Support Specialist. So, there are a lot of things to celebrate.

Several clubs embraced the spirit of December by giving back to their community. The Adventure Club at NAIT and the Board Game Club collaborated and organized a blood donation run, while the Respiratory Therapy Class 2026 held a Christmas food bank drive. And as part of their weekly events, the Super Smash Bros. Club smashed it with their food bank special event, where members had to donate a non-perishable food item to enter. Basic applauded the clubs' community focus: “It's wonderful to see students giving back, especially around this time of year, when they're all busy with their studies and everything.”

Campus Clubs is also celebrating some “crazy good” achievements in the fall semester. There are currently over 65 active clubs, which Basic explained is almost double the number from Fall 2023. “We've had over 260 events, hosted by over 50 organizations so far,” said Basic. And, over 2000 students attended club events in the fall semester.

At Club Showcase, several clubs won awards for their interaction and presentation with showcase-goers. Punjab at NAIT took home the People's Choice Award “by a landslide,” said Basic. “They did super, super well ... they won by quite a margin.”

The Nigerian Students' Association won first place in the Secret Judges Award, where NAITSA staff secretly judge the booths on a variety of factors, including overall presentation and engagement with attendees.

Campus Clubs has also given away \$20,000 in grants so far, with “lots more money available.” Club members can apply for grants to assist with a number of things, such as running events or planning activities. For example, grants helped Great Northern Concrete Toboggan Race Club fund their toboggan building and travel to their annual competition. The Game Creator's Space club also used their grant to host their Level Up conference in March.

What's upcoming

As Basic mentioned, clubs are only just beginning. There's lots on the horizon for January, including “bigger and better events.”

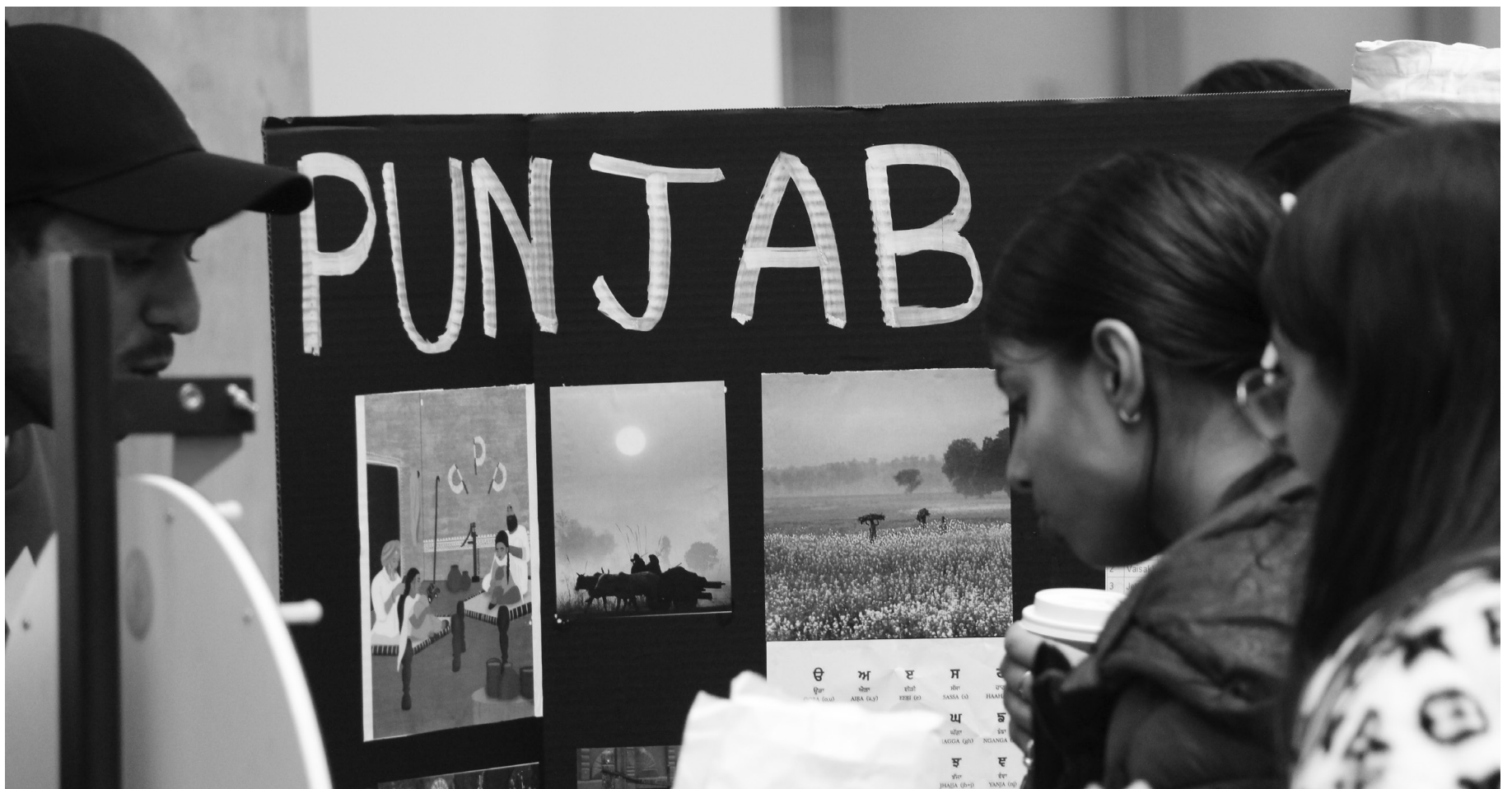
“A lot of clubs are in full swing right now. They're hitting their stride and prepping for events,” Basic explained. “We have a couple of really cool conferences coming up, so like day-long events, two-day long events for different program clubs.”

One of the events that Basic mentioned is IT Connections, an IT-focused career fair hosted by the Computer Technology Club and the DMIT Club. Students can expect a lineup of industry speakers, chances to network with employers and opportunities to explore a variety of IT career paths. The location is still being decided, but the event will occur on Feb. 25 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The NAITSA office will be closed from Dec. 19 to Jan. 1 and reopens on Jan. 2. Basic reminded students to “stay strong”

“Push through the last bit, we are going to be into the new year soon.”

Good things come to an end, but greater things have sequels. See you next year, NAIT.



The Punjab at NAIT Club won People's Choice at the Fall Clubs Showcase “by a landslide.” Their booth, pictured above.

Photo by Skylar Boissonnault



Art by Jasreet Dhillon

6 WINTER FACTS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW

The coldest ever day in Canada was -63 C. It happened in 1947, in Snag, Yukon. What about the coldest day in the world? In the Antarctic, it reached a diabolical -93.2 C in August 2010.

Thundersnow is a real thing. According to an article by Mental Floss, “when columns of warm air rise from the ground and form turbulent storm clouds in the sky in the winter, there’s potential for thundersnow.”

3 Canadian cities made the list of snowiest major cities in the world, according to Accuweather. Saguenay, Quebec, gets about 123 inches of snow per year. Quebec City tied for fifth with about 124 inches. And St. John’s, Newfoundland, came in at fourth with about 131 inches a year.

Think Edmonton’s winter is long? Winter, along with all other seasons, lasts for 21 years on Uranus. How long do you think they get off for reading week?

A Nordic Hot Spring in Whitehorse, Yukon, holds a hair freezing contest every year. They even earned a Guinness World Record in August 2020 for the largest frozen hair competition! 288 people participated by visiting when the temperature was below -20 C, dipping their head in the water and styling their soon-to-freeze hair.

Speaking of records, the tallest snowperson was made in 2008 by Robin Zinchuk and residents of Bethel, Maine. It took them a month to make their snow woman masterpiece, and they used 13 million pounds of snow.

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mouththing OFF



WHAT'S THE BEST HOLIDAY MOVIE?

Photos by Skylar Boissonault

"Qismat. It's a Punjabi movie."

-Dilpreet Singh

Business Administration, Management

"The Grinch. I am the grinch. I do an insane grinch impression."

-Catt Laid

Dental Assisting Certificate

"It's A Wonderful Life!"

-Gabrielle Beisick

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