

# NAIT NUGGET

Wednesday, April 23, 2025  
Volume 65, Issue 8

thenuggetonline.com  
@thenaitnugget



## IN THIS ISSUE

### 2 NEGOTIATIONS AT CROSSROAD

While most students are wrapping up their semester, a high-stakes situation is unfolding behind closed doors—one that could impact your the stability of your education next year.

### 6 CHATGPT IS KILLING MY SPARK

Lately, something feels off...written content has started to blend together, creating a mess of bland, boring, basic words on a screen. Is AI killing our creativity?

### 12-13 WE'RE NOT GOING BACK

They may have ended the season without a trophy, but the women's volleyball team has quietly built a foundation over the last three years—one with championship potential.

# Negotiations at a crossroads: What NAIT students should know

Editorial by Jason Roth, External Relations Director, NAITSA

While most students are wrapping up their semester and looking ahead to summer, a high-stakes situation is unfolding behind closed doors. It's something that could impact your classes, your instructors and the stability of your education next year.

NAIT and its academic staff association, known as NASA, have been trying to reach a new agreement since the last one expired in June 2024. So far, it's been slow, frustrating and far from productive. And while no one wants to use the word "strike," it is unfortunately still a possibility.

So what's happening, and why should you care?

## What this is really about

From time to time, NAIT and NASA must renegotiate the contract that sets salaries, working conditions and teaching expectations for instructors. These agreements are standard at most post-secondary institutions, but they're also complex and sometimes contentious.

At NAIT, things got off to a rocky start. Instead of beginning meaningful negotiations before the agreement expired, discussions were delayed for months because the two sides couldn't agree on when to meet. NASA pushed for evening and weekend talks to avoid high reimbursement costs for its large bargaining team. NAIT, pointing to the previous agreement, preferred to meet during business hours.

Eventually, both parties filed complaints with the Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB), which had to step in and issue a directive. The ruling required both parties to share the burden by meeting during a mix of business hours and evenings or weekends. It also set a minimum of 30 hours of negotiation to be completed by Dec. 15, 2024. They were also directed to continuing bargaining in this fashion if an agreement wasn't reached by then.

## It's April. Still no deal.

Despite that intervention, we're now in April 2025 and a new agreement has yet to be reached. There has been some progress. Mediation is underway, and a handful of bargaining sessions took place in March and April. But the pace is glacial, and students are left wondering how long this can drag on.

NASA has proposed a 25 percent raise in the first year and another 10 percent the following year. That's a significant ask, especially considering that other institutions like SAIT have recently agreed to more moderate increases of 3 percent annually. According to an update posted by NASA on April 15, NAIT has proposed 10 per cent over 4 years with no retroactive pay.

NAITSA understands that after a decade without wage increases, academic staff have legitimate concerns. But at the same time, we're frustrated by how slow and complicated this process has become. It is hard to believe that things have taken this long not because of the proposals, but because they couldn't even agree on when to meet. Students deserve more certainty than what they've been given so far.



NAIT staff, students and other unions gathered outside in an informational rally NASA hosted in October 2024 about the ongoing collective bargaining. Photo by Skylar Boissonnault

## Why this matters to you

If talks break down and a strike happens, students will be directly affected. Classes could be cancelled or delayed. Program timelines might shift. Fall schedules could be left hanging. And the reputation of NAIT as a place for reliable, high-quality education could take a hit.

It's not just a hypothetical. NAIT is already under pressure from declining international enrolment and stagnant provincial funding. A strike would make a tough situation worse. And students, who are already managing tight budgets and demanding course loads, would bear the brunt.

## A call for leadership

It's time for both sides to show leadership. There's a path forward, and it starts with compromise, flexibility and a renewed focus on what matters most—students.

The Labour Board already laid out a reasonable expectation: meet during a mix of hours, make consistent progress, and work toward a fair and balanced deal. Yet here we are, nearly a year after the last contract expired, and still without an agreement. NAITSA is urging both parties to double their efforts and treat this with the urgency it deserves.

We're not here to take sides. But we are here to speak for students, and students need answers. They need stability. They need to know their education is not going to be used as a bargaining chip.

## Moving forward

NAITSA will continue advocating for students and keeping you informed as this process unfolds. Our message to NAIT and NASA is simple: Finish the job. Meet. Negotiate. Compromise. Get a deal done.

Because students are watching. And they need to know their future is in steady hands.

**naitsa** NAIT NUGGET

Informing and entertaining the NAIT community since 1964.

Room O-105  
11762-106 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5G 2R1

Media Operations  
(780) 471-7615  
@thenaitnugget  
thenuggetonline.com

### SENIOR EDITOR

Alleah Boisvert  
arts@thenuggetonline.com

### SPORTS EDITOR

Geono Aloisio  
sports@thenuggetonline.com

### ARTS & LIFE EDITOR

Sukhamjit  
news@thenuggetonline.com

### ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Sanjyven Alfred Joseph  
entertainment@thenuggetonline.com

### MEDIA EDITOR

Jalyn Dalke  
media@thenuggetonline.com

### PHOTO EDITOR

Skylar Boissonnault  
media@thenuggetonline.com

### ONLINE EDITOR

Taylor Hughes

### LAYOUT ASSISTANT

Darlynna Ting

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Amy St. Amand  
astamand@nait.ca

### FRONT COVER

NAIT Ooks

The Nugget is an independent media source. The opinions within do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Nugget or NAITSA.

# Bronze and beyond for 4 NAIT students

By Sukhamjit

NAIT business students earned third place in a case competition aimed at tackling issues with the Fort McMurray Airport. The Alberta Deans of Business Case Competition was held between March 13 and March 15 at Keyano College. The competition included 11 teams from Albertan post-secondary institutions, asked present solutions to real-life business case problems provided by the Fort McMurray International Airport. Teams were asked: “How can Fort McMurray International Airport increase its passenger volumes and reduce the number of passengers driving to other airports to board flights?”

NAIT’s team of Bianca Melanie Hamtig, Christian Joseph Reyes, Emma Joy Shentaler and William Aubrey James Smith earned third position in the competition. In an interview with the Nugget, Reyes described his experience to be “liberating.”

“You get to work with a completely different set of individuals [and] experts. I gained some really good insights and learnings...they opened my eyes to new realizations in terms of how we do business,” he explained.

The team came to be when all four of the members decided to participate by submitting a two-minute video application for the competition. They were selected from dozens of applicants. Their team approached the problem with collaborative brainstorming to present a marketing-focused solution to the airport problem.

“Getting people in the region of Fort McMurray more confidence in flying out of Fort McMurray Airport, debunking some of the myths, with some actual statistics [and] getting people excited about starting their journeys in Fort McMurray,” Smith said of their proposed solution.

The team said that preparation for the competition was key to their success. They came in prepared even before arriving for the competition, Hamtig said. “We made sure that we had frequent practices...then, before the competition itself, we made sure that our template for our PowerPoint is already created.”

Coaches also played a significant part in the preparation, Shentaler shared. Before the competition, the team practiced various case problems where they would receive feedback from the coaches on how they can improve. “On the day of the competition, they [coaches] helped us figure out what we were going to say and how we were going to present in a way that would make the judges like us rather than us just saying facts.”

Each participant said they gained something different from the competition.



The competing students pose at the ADBCC.

Photo supplied

For Hamtig, it was an opportunity to apply what she learned in the classroom. “My recent lectures from my entrepreneurship classes really helped, especially the marketing plan, design thinking, risk analysis and stuff like that.”

Smith learnt to trust his team. “During the competition, there was a point where I wasn’t keeping up with the thought process...I wasn’t following. I got a little frustrated, but I learned that just putting the trust into my team, it all worked out in the end.”

For Shentaler, the competition improved her critical thinking and public speaking skills. “I learned that I need to work on that a lot, but it definitely gave me a lot of tools I can use to improve in those areas, and it’s going to help me for the rest of my school career and even beyond that.”

Students from the JR Shaw School of Business have competed in multiple case competitions, including the Alberta Not-for-Profit Association Case Competition and the Rotman International Trading Competition.

As this year’s ADBCC team shared, not only do these provide an opportunity to develop critical skills that are transferable to various industries, but you may also gain some friends beyond the competition that you can count on.

## Vybe skincare’s journey to a new beginning

By Sukhamjit

In a stampede of already existing skincare brands, one NAIT student found her distinction: edible skincare. At the Mawji Centre’s annual Pitch It To Me competition in February, Ishita Sharm took home first place for her business Vybe Skincare, now called Ghii.

Sharma’s business focuses on bringing back “ancestral beauty secrets,” she told the Nugget. The spark that provoked her thinking, and ultimately turned into a winning idea, came from her mom’s suggestion of using ghee—a type of clarified butter—for dried lips.

Sharma’s philosophy is based on the experience of previous generations and how they used nature-based cosmetics for skin care. “They [our ancestors] never had those problems, and even if they did, they had natural cures to it, they never had issues with their skin that they needed chemicals,” she claimed.

Despite the challenges, Sharma encouraged students interested in entrepreneurship to “just go for it.”

“[The] most that could happen is you will fail at it. So you will start something else. Even if you are failing, you are failing at a stage to start something new with a better understanding,” she said. And with three other startups, she

knows what she’s talking about: loving the process instead of obsessing over the results makes it all easier. “It’s just about trying and seeing what suits you the best, what you think can actually benefit the world.”

Once you have an idea, finding resources to help you make it a reality can be tough. But Sharma found a community at NAIT’s Mawji Centre and their Blue Book program—an eight month program designed to take a business idea from start to finish. She also credits Dale Schaub, the Lead Entrepreneurship Consultant at the Mawji Centre, and Rob LeLacheur, owner of a creative consultant agency called Road 55, for a major share in her victory and the start of the enterprise itself.

“Dale was the one that helped me a lot, I used to bug him for everything. Like for social media, for connecting me to somebody who can help me with marketing and stuff. I think he is really good connector. He connected me to Rob, who was my pitch coach, and that was the biggest reason I actually won the competition,” said Sharma.

Find Sharma and GHII on social media, and perhaps in the next few years, your local beauty store.

# There's no shame in (re)learning Canadian Parliament basics

By Alleah Boisvert

I'm sure I'm not the only one who fell asleep during social studies in grade school. I remember nodding off on a school trip to Alberta's Legislature while supposed to be observing parliamentary processes. This landed me in trouble with my teacher, who couldn't understand how I could sleep in front of elected officials. But let's face it—learning about parliament just isn't that interesting for a lot of young people.

Now, as an adult, I find our government system much more interesting. However, much of it was still mystifying, especially after forgetting what I learned as a kid (when I wasn't asleep). On social media, I often see frustration from people about the lack of knowledge surrounding Canadian Parliament.

"Looks like you didn't finish middle school."

"Don't you realize you learned this in grade six?"

I don't blame Canadians for this.

Between forgetting what we were taught years ago and American elections leaking into our political zeitgeist, it's no surprise many of us are either misinformed or misremembering.

And with the 2025 Canadian Federal Election coming up on April 28, there's growing concern about this knowledge gap. So, here's a basic breakdown.

## Levels of government in Canada

Canada is a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. The Crown represents the Head of State, symbolized by the Governor General. While the Governor General holds some power, such as signing bills into law and calling federal elections, their role is mostly ceremonial.

Below the Crown, the Canadian parliamentary system consists of an Executive Branch—the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and a Legislative Branch—the Senate and House of Commons.

The Cabinet are ministers chosen by the Prime Minister to develop policies and introduce bills based on their responsible departments.

The Senate represents various regions and scrutinizes legislation, while the House of Commons consists of elected Members of Parliament (MPs) representing ridings across Canada.

## How a party wins power

When a federal election rolls around, Canadians must vote for a preferred candidate to represent their riding in the House of Commons. This means Canadians do not directly vote for a Prime Minister—rather, they elect a partisan candidate running a campaign in their constituency or riding. This elected Member of Parliament is chosen based on several reasons: some Canadians may vote for a specific candidate if they align with a certain political party, and other Canadians may vote for a specific candidate if they think the candidate will best represent where they live. Whichever candidate gets the highest number of votes will win a seat for their riding—this is how the House of Commons is formed. Whichever party gets the most seats wins the federal election.

Each political party selects a leader, often through a vote by party members. Even though the Prime Minister leads the party and its policies, it's the party that wins the election, not the individual. Party members can consist of the public, meaning party leaders are still elected officials. This is why the Liberal Party is still in power despite leadership changes—the party was elected by Canadians and can finish its term unless a confidence vote is lost, even with a new Liberal leader.

## Majority and minority governments

All Members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons, even ones that do not belong to the party that wins a federal election, play a crucial role. They debate and vote on new laws, government spending and policies. They also act as the Official Opposition if their party wins the next highest number of



The Canadian Parliament building in Ottawa.

Photo by Saffron Blaze, Wikimedia

seats, which publicly holds the elected party accountable. The number of seats won by each party determines a majority or minority government. A majority government occurs when a party wins more than half the seats in the House of Commons. They'll have full control of government and don't need support from other parties to pass laws and budgets. If a party wins less than half the seats but still has the most seats in comparison to other parties, they form a minority government and need support from the opposition to pass bills.

A minority government can also form coalitions with different parties to stay in power, but this requires compromise and negotiation. Without the support of other parties, this type of government has little stability, and the Governor General can call a new election if a confidence vote is lost.

In some cases, such as what we are seeing with the Liberal party today, the Prime Minister may choose to resign even if no vote of confidence is lost. This allows the federal government to elect a new party leader who may be able to perform better in the next federal election.

## What is the federal government in charge of, anyway?

With an election on the horizon, it's also important to understand what the federal, provincial and municipal governments are responsible for. This can help voters make more informed decisions. The federal government's key responsibilities include defense, immigration, criminal law, national transportation and foreign affairs. As for provincial or territorial governments—they are responsible for more local and regional concerns, including education, healthcare, natural resources, justice, provincial transportation and setting rules for municipal governments. Municipal governments are even more localized, focusing on local infrastructure, public health, housing, public safety and waste management.

All levels work together, with the federal government providing funding to the provinces and municipalities, though provinces have more discretion on how the funds are used.

## Why should you care?

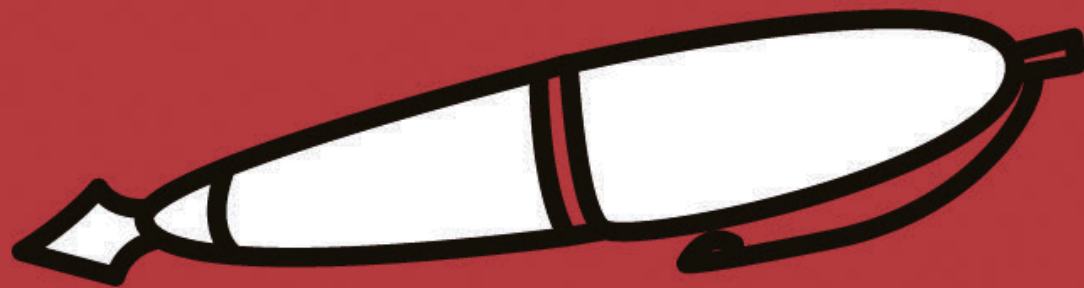
Voting is at the heart of Canada's democracy, which scores 97/100 in Global Freedom and 86/100 in Internet Freedom, according to FreedomHouse. While not perfect, it's a solid system compared to many other countries. If we want to keep it that way, it's essential to vote. But it's also important to understand how our government works so we can improve it.

For many, this article might feel like a return to grade six social studies. If you've stuck with me, I commend you for revisiting the basics of Canadian Parliament. Take it from me—there's no shame in re-learning.



# JOIN THE STUDENT MEDIA TEAM

DEVELOP YOUR STORYTELLING AND  
MULTIMEDIA SKILLS AND GET PAID!



[THENUGGETONLINE.COM](http://THENUGGETONLINE.COM)



# ChatGPT is killing my spark (and it's killing yours, too)

By Alleah Boisvert

I've been a passionate reader and writer ever since I was little. Reading other peoples' experiences and writing about my own has always been a large part of my life. I was that kid who hid under the covers, reading novels with a flashlight until well after midnight. Then, I was that teenager who used Facebook as a personal blog, writing out my limited life experiences with way too much passion for a social media post five people would read. Now, I'm an adult working in student journalism, something most of my high school teachers would find unsurprising. I like reading stories, I like writing stories and I like helping others tell stories.

But lately, something feels off. It seems like lots of written content has started to blend together, creating a mess of bland, boring, basic words on a screen. There's really no nice way to say this: it's uninspiring slop. Not to be dramatic, but it makes my soul shrivel up. How many times do I have to "embark on a journey" to "delve into the complexities" of this "cultural tapestry" that's "crucial to understand" in order to "harness the power" and "act as a catalyst for change" in this "fast-paced and ever-growing world" before I, "in conclusion," "seamlessly integrate" myself into a "robust framework" of on-coming traffic?

As someone who graduated high school in the early 2010s, AI-written content in academia and journalism is still a new concept for me. When I started the business program at NAIT, ChatGPT didn't even exist. All my written research, essays, copy and captions up until the last year or so of my education are mine, and mine alone. So, it's frustrating when group members use ChatGPT improperly to lazily generate research and writing. It often results in unintended plagiarism, incorrect citations, or no citations at all—just a vague spread of sentences that barely connect to theories we're supposed to be learning from textbooks and peer-reviewed articles. I try to bite my tongue; I've heard the opinion that some people's unacceptance of AI chat bots in 2025 is like other people's unacceptance of calculators or the Internet. It's a part of life now, and we should allow its use.

Biting my tongue keeps the peace in group projects, but it stings in a creative environment. As a writer and editor, the paranoia of ChatGPT generated articles is always gnawing at me. When I recognize that robotic structure, I want to crawl out of my skin. The grammatically perfect, em-dashed paragraphs of algorithmic patterns make my eyes glaze over as I'm reading. Isn't this piece supposed to be about your perspective? Are you really sharing your perspective if ChatGPT generated it for you?

Seeing students use this technology as a creativity-stifling crutch is infuriating, especially when it's being used to generate written content that requires the perspective of a human being with empathy and lived experiences.

I don't want to come off as a technology-hating millennial. Don't get me wrong; AI writing tools like Grammarly can be extremely useful, and ChatGPT can be useful, too. But when you use it to generate entire paragraphs of writing

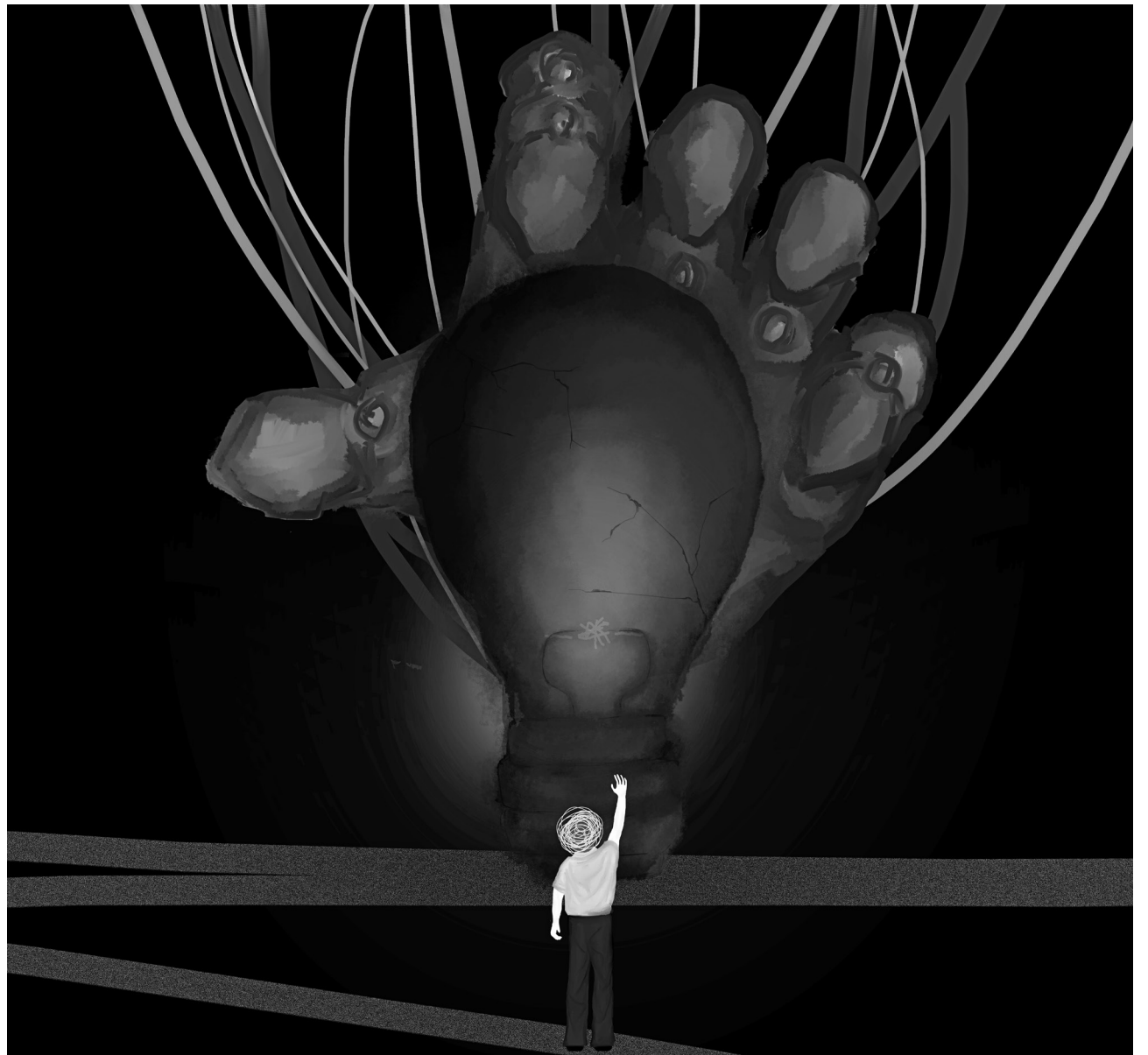


Illustration By Darlyna Ting

instead of simply using it as an editing tool, you sound the exact same as every other student out there cheating their way through written assignments by getting ChatGPT to write them for you. Take it from someone who reads multiple student writing pieces a week: ChatGPT is killing your spark just as much as it's killing my passion. Even as I'm writing this, I'm worried about sounding like a silly little chat bot. Unfortunately, I'm sure ChatGPT has already changed the way I write.

I know artists are frustrated with AI being used to replicate art—as they should be. But writing is also an art form that connects us. Not everyone is a skilled writer, and I believe AI can help bridge gaps for those who need it. Still, I want you to remember that your unique writing voice, despite grammatical and technical incorrectness, is special in this world. Grammar and technique can be easily fixed, but nothing can replace a writer's tone and cadence. I've been able to make even the most grammatically incorrect pieces of writing shine through edits—but when a piece of writing lacks an original perspective and personality, that's when things get tricky. I can't write your story for you, and neither can ChatGPT.

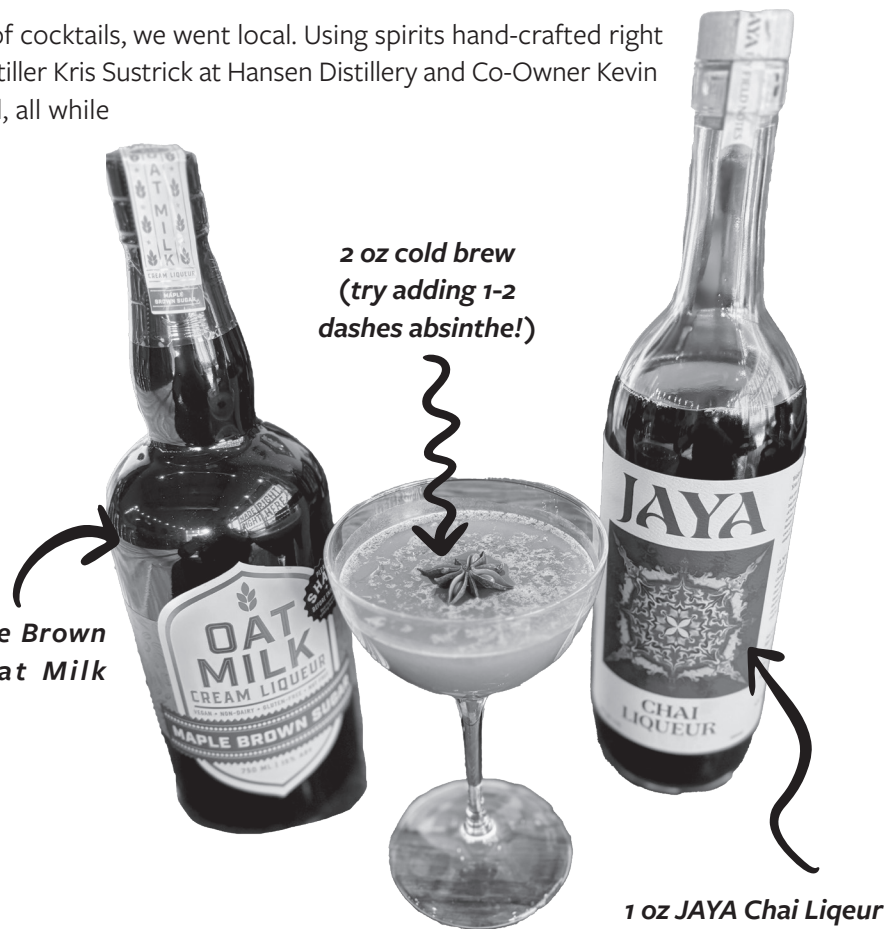
# The spirit of Edmonton, literally

Photos and recipes by Skylar Boissonnault

Shopping locally has never been more important than now, so for this round of cocktails, we went local. Using spirits hand-crafted right here in Edmonton and area, and even featuring some NAIT Alumni, like Master Distiller Kris Sustrick at Hansen Distillery and Co-Owner Kevin Danard from Growlery Beer Co. We're ranging from a sangria to a beer cocktail, all while keeping local in mind.

## Chai Level

Hansen Distillery worked diligently for four years with NAIT's Culinary Research Program to bring you a very special liqueur: the Oat Milk Maple Brown Sugar Cream Liqueur. It's dairy free, gluten free, nut free and because it has no milk or eggs in it, it also makes it vegan! They wanted to make an actually good alternative, with no weird aftertaste or weird textures. This paired with Edmonton's JAYA Chai Liqueur gives you the perfect pick-me-up when you need a little more. This dirty chai inspired shaft will have you eager for more (no Lactaid needed here!)



## Blatchford Kolschito

I always joke that the craft beer industry has a chokehold on Edmonton... and I'm not wrong. So, I bring you a beer cocktail featuring local spirit, beer and even bitters. The star of this show is Growlery Beer Co.'s 1929 Kölsch, a balanced and crisp beer that tops off this one-of-a-kind mojito. Hansen Distillery's Grandma Jingle Bells Lime Shine subs in perfectly for white rum, and Highlands Mojito Bitters from Token Bitters give you that fresh minty vibe with no muddling required.

## Whyte & Wild

Summer sangria anyone? When you sip this you can't help but think of a fresh berry crisp, straight out of the oven, and I'm obsessed. Hard Core Apple is an organic apple wine produced by Birds and Bees Farmery from Edmonton. This sparkling white makes for a great topper to a sangria. Now if sangrias aren't your thing, the wine can easily be subbed out with club soda. When it comes to topping it off you can use the measurement I gave, or as I always say, "Measure with your heart."



# Crash, bleed, repeat: Healthcare students rehearse for real life

*It's not real—but it feels like it. And that's the point.*

By Blair Garneau

"I'm going to f\*\*\*ing kill you once I'm free!" screams the patient. He thrashes in his hospital bed, violently, likely under the influence of drugs. One NAIT student tries to talk him down while another takes a reading on an instrument. The man is uncooperative, and the duress shows on the student's face. The textbook made this procedure seem simple. Nothing in their earlier training prepared them for the verbal whiplash of a violent patient. Meanwhile, an instructor watches silently from a nearby control room, observing everything on a wall of camera feeds and taking notes.

After all, this is *just* a simulation.

Welcome to the Center for Advanced Medical Simulation—better known as CAMS—NAIT's little-known, but most intense classroom, tucked away behind an unassuming hallway in the CAT building.

CAMS is the only facility of its kind in Canada offering health sciences students real-world exposure without real-world risk. The violent patient? A trained actor. The hospital room? One of a dozen dynamic sets. The simulation? One of countless scenarios carefully crafted by a team of learning experts.

CAMS is to health students what the auto shop is to mechanics—a hands-on training ground. The facility has been jokingly described by staff as a movie studio, where sets transform multiple times a day. It's 6000 square feet, with over 40,000 logged hours of simulation time. CAMS is one of four facilities in Canada to receive accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare.

There's a backstage prep room for actors, a miniature workshop to craft silicone wounds and fake blood and a storeroom filled with animatronic mannequins. A hydraulic ambulance platform shakes paramedics into motion—imagine performing CPR while riding a mechanical bull. A high-end driving simulator throws unpredictable traffic situations at students. And in the extended reality space, 360° projectors, synchronized lighting, and even scent machines create a 4D sensory experience.

"When done correctly, simulation can be incredibly valuable," said Emilio Violato, a Research Associate at CAMS. "High quality simulation can actually offer advantages, like improving interprofessional collaboration and communication."

The centre is extremely flexible—and busy. In under 30 minutes, entire theatre rooms can be flipped into new scenarios. Nearly 100 students move through CAMS daily—thousands each semester. Cameras and microphones line every space, capturing every angle and word. Think reality television, but with a clinical purpose. Every simulation is observed, recorded and debriefed. Like an assembly line, students go in as learners and emerge as more confident, competent practitioners.

Tom Waring, the Lead Simulation Technologist, explained that the room is typically set up as a standard operating room, with equipment students will encounter in the workplace like live oxygen, suction and everything they'd see in a hospital. But for certain scenarios, they have the flexibility to change scenes as needed.

"In this space before, we've had a pub, sports bar type set up, with paramedics responding, broken glass, liquor all over, things like that," he explained. Even students pitch simulation ideas, some worthy of a primetime medical drama.

Behind the scenes is a team of specialists: operations managers, learning scientists, biomedical engineers and multimedia experts. They work with



Photos by Skylar Boissonnault

instructors and industry partners to create leading-edge training experiences to prepare healthcare students for anything. Simulations are designed to be unpredictable, but learning is always at the forefront of everyone's mind.

"If it's a student's first time coming in, we're not going to have a super high-stress environment...it'll be a negative learning experience," said Efrem Violato, a Research Associate at CAMS. "They might not like [simulations] or ever want to come back."

Before CAMS opened in 2016, students had to rely on theory and horror stories from instructors. Carolyn Kincaide, the Operations Manager at CAMS, took Dental Technology at NAIT "a long time ago."

"We practiced on each other," she shared. "The first time interacting with a real patient happened out in the wild, as a professional, and so, the shock factor is real."

---

*"When done correctly, simulation can be incredibly valuable...high quality simulation can actually offer advantages, like improving interprofessional collaboration and communication."*

---



“The fact that the students get to do that for practice safely here means that we have better healthcare professionals out there, who are better equipped to deal with patients.”

After practicing, students can review their own simulations, watching how they respond, decide and communicate under pressure. The team also incorporates patient stories, designing simulations to promote cultural sensitivity, accessibility and trauma-informed care. They continually adjust scenarios to reflect real-world diversity, preparing students not just to treat illness, but to understand the people behind it.

“We include patient partners in a lot of the curriculum. They share lived experiences in the healthcare system, helping students understand how their words and actions can impact someone’s care journey,” the Associate Chair of Interprofessional Education, Lisa George, told the Nugget.

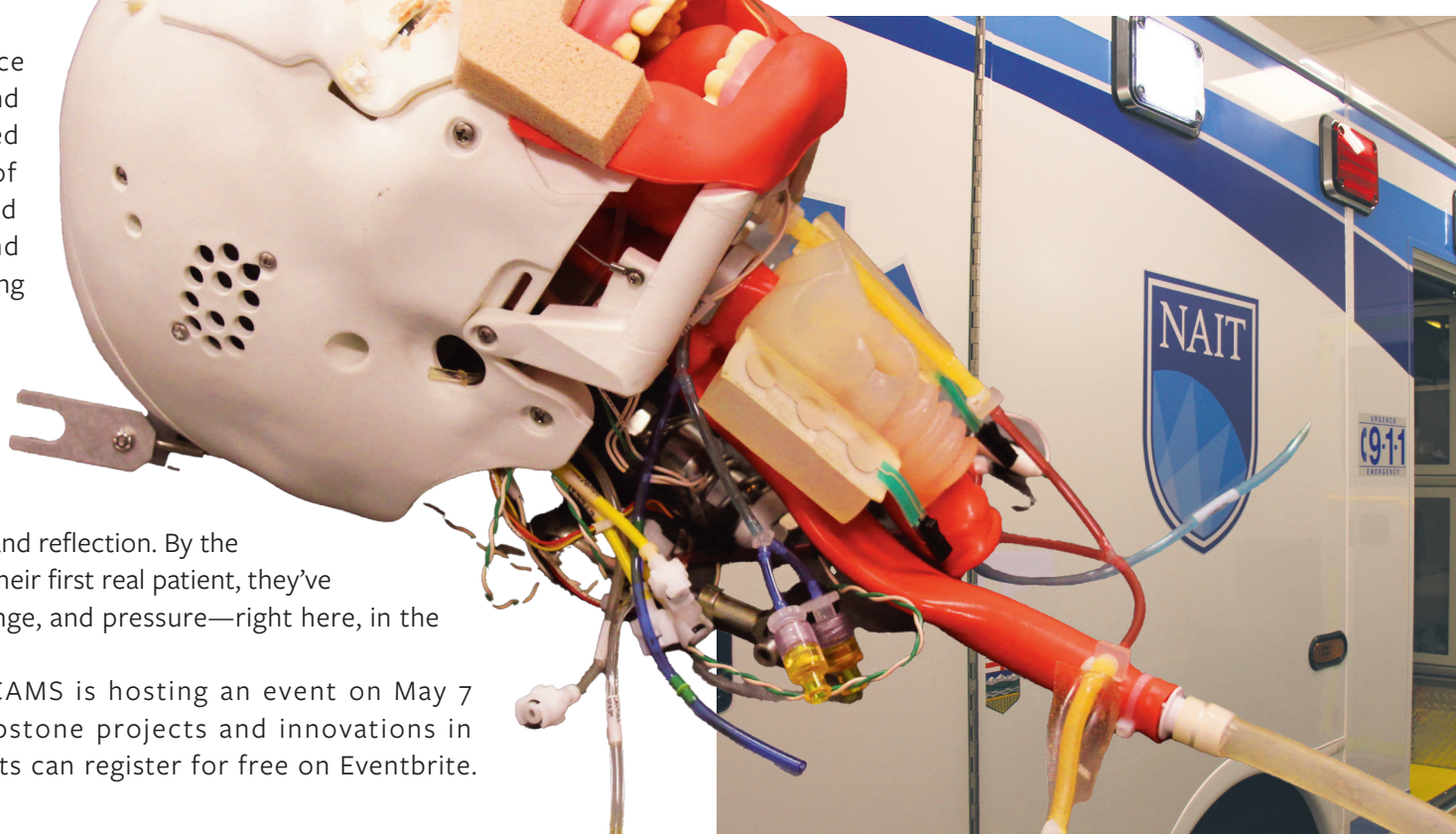
CAMS also collaborates outside the School of Health and Life Sciences. Students from Mechanical Engineering Technology and Digital Media and IT have used the simulation space and engaged in projects with CAMS. The team is always open to new ideas—especially from outside the health sciences.



External clients, from police and military to hospitals and manufacturers have worked with CAMS for a variety of projects. Some approached to test new equipment, and others sought custom training programs.

CAMS is a world-class facility training the next wave of healthcare professionals—not through lectures, but through repetition, realism and reflection. By the time NAIT’s students meet their first real patient, they’ve already faced chaos, challenge, and pressure—right here, in the theatres of CAMS.

Want to learn more? CAMS is hosting an event on May 7 to showcase student capstone projects and innovations in health technology. Students can register for free on Eventbrite to participate.



# Canadians won't stop turning their radio dials anytime soon

By Kelsey Kliparchuk

Every day, Canadians tune in by the millions to our beloved and free companion—the radio. However, with the growing popularity of streaming services and podcasts over the last decade, are young listeners abandoning the airwaves completely?

While we consume media in many ways, the numbers aren't lying: radio is still one of the tried and true outlets for music and news. In Radio Connects' Audio Landscape Update, done in 2024, they dispel the perception that video, or in this case podcasts, killed the radio star.

Rather, radio has adapted. Canadians spend an average of 90 minutes daily listening to the airwaves, equal to the time they spend streaming.

Edmonton boasts over 60 radio stations across the city, with over 1.26 million people listening daily, and on a global scale, Canada ranks third for the largest radio market in the world (according to the WARC 2021 Global Survey).

You may be thinking, “couldn't be me,” as our campus radio station NR92 plays your favourite song in the halls, or 102.3 NOW! Radio is on in the waiting room of your doctor's office.

Regardless of how you get your music each day, it's undeniable: radio is here to stay.

So, who defines what is relevant? Is it the 19-year old who doesn't drive or the 35-year-old who's thriving in their career? Is it based on listener behaviour or advertising dollars?

“What is old will become new again,” said NAIT Radio and Television Instructor, Dave Sawchuk, when asked about the future of radio. “The idea of what made radio successful is never going to make it unsuccessful.”

Though technically it is a free service, we pay for it with our time spent—sometimes agonizingly, by listening to six-minute commercial breaks. Radio's relevancy is partially determined by the thickness of advertisers wallets, and business is booming!

“When you're 18 to 21, and you're sleeping in until 11 on a Sunday, you're not necessarily into the rhythm of society as a taxpayer and an earner. And radio is built for those people,” said Sawchuk. “It's a business. Full stop.”

***Young people are still passionate about audio, about music, about storytelling, about bringing success to local advertisers and about the community that radio embraces and creates.”***

However, adding more choices into the mix does mean radio needs to continually adapt. “Our [radio's] role in society could change, and as



Inside NR92, NAIT's campus radio station.

Photo by Leigh Kovesy, NAIT Content Collective

demographics get fragmented, younger people have other choices,” Sawchuk said. “I didn't have other choices at 18. I either bought the CD or listened to the radio. There was no third door.”

“18 to 21-year-olds have lots of doors to go to get their content, and they go to those places, but the statistics still say they come to radio as well. So just because we're not the only game in town anymore, doesn't mean we're closing up shop. We're just changing what we do.”

And with times and technology changing, some radio stations have experimented with things like AI radio hosts.

“They have AI announcers in the east coast of Canada. You can find that radio station and record it and listen to it. Sounds kind of silly, but I think in the end it's going to help,” he explained.

While Sawchuk isn't sure where AI and radio are heading, he is optimistic about how it may help the industry.

“It's like the first motor car or the first stick of dynamite or the first shuttle that went up. We weren't really sure. We're figuring it out.”

Semester after semester, year after year, NAIT's Radio and Television program demonstrates that young people are still interested in media. According to Sawchuk, the program is full every year.

“Applicants are still coming. Young people are still passionate about audio, about music, about storytelling, about bringing success to local advertisers and about the community that radio embraces and creates.”

Radio is based on ratings, and the ratings don't lie. So, let's tune in and support our local radio stations (like NR92) because we've got plenty of options.

# When your heroes fall

Editorial by Rafael Luis Flores

“Never meet your heroes,” a saying sometimes attributed to French novelist Marcel Proust, pertains to the disappointment one feels upon discovering that a person whom they admire turns out to be unworthy of the pedestal they are placed on.

I did meet my hero and idol. And, in disregard to Mr. Proust’s warning, I found it to be a happy event at that time. What I did not know was that this same hero would later fall from grace in the worst way possible.

I met Neil Gaiman 20 years ago during an autograph-signing event. He was a rising star in the literary world—an author who first gained fame through his deliberately themed graphic novels. I was fascinated by both the transcendental themes in his stories and the biting social commentary woven throughout.

His work on the popular “Sandman” series provided me the push that I did not know I needed towards critical thinking and intellectual maturity. I idolized him. At my old home back in Manila, I even have an entire shelf dedicated to my Neil Gaiman book collection, many of which are hardbound first editions.

For a long while, it seemed that he could do no wrong. From graphic novels, he transitioned to writing full-length fantasy novels, which almost automatically became bestsellers. High-profile friendships and collaborations with other popular artists such as Tori Amos, Alan Moore and the late Terry Pratchett seemingly upped his artistic credentials. Meanwhile, on-screen adaptations of his books in later years ensured that he gained new fans from younger generations.

## The allegations

In July 2024, a podcast called “Master: the allegations against Neil Gaiman” was released, which detailed various accounts of sexual assault that the author allegedly perpetrated against multiple women. While this produced enough buzz to generate online discussions, it was not until the January 2025 publication of the article “There is no safe word” detailing these same allegations (and more) that the issue gained widespread public scrutiny. Instead of anonymous subreddits, the discussions were thrust out in the open, causing the formerly well-respected author to receive near-universal condemnation. And even today, more and more people are coming out to either corroborate the victims’ allegations or make new accusations.

At that point, there was no longer any doubt that it was a legacy-shattering event. One by one, publishing houses did not want to have anything to do with his name anymore. The situation with screen and stage adaptations of his works is mixed, with studios and production houses all initiating varying forms of disengagement with the author.

Being a long-time admirer of his, I found it excruciatingly difficult to accept the prospect of my idol being a prolific sexual predator. And I was not alone. Many other admirers, especially women, were internally conflicted because, for many years, the author was widely regarded as a progressive feminist ally. He frequently incorporated strong women as characters in his works and even advocated for women empowerment in numerous public statements. I did go into a denial phase over this, but it was brief. The #MeToo movement has made me jaded enough to no longer be shocked when well-loved or influential public figures turn out to be horrible people. But this does not in any

way diminish my grave disappointment and utter disillusionment with someone who had such a positive influence in my life, especially given the scale of the misconduct alleged.

This consequently produced a lot of questions in my mind: How do I make sense of all this? Is it possible to separate the art from the artist? What happens to my book collection now? And on a deeper personal level, does this invalidate all the good things that happened in my life because of the inspiration I took from his works?

For a long time, I credited him with teaching me how to think for myself and to always have a healthy amount of doubt about everything I see, read and hear. But perhaps these learnings unknowingly prepared me for this moment. You see, my favorite irony about idolizing Neil Gaiman is the fact that he continuously demolishes the very idea of needing idols in one’s life (You can call it “planting the seeds of his own destruction” if you want. At this point, I’m open to any kind of rationalization just to soothe my own feelings of regret and shame).

Even before this unhappy experience, I was already skeptical about public figures who fashion themselves as thought leaders, whether they be musicians, politicians, religious leaders or authors. Neil Gaiman was meant to be the shining exception to all that. I was prepared to live the rest of my life occasionally quoting his best lines on social media, or introduce his works to younger generations or maybe even let my nephew inherit my book collection. Now all that is gone and the world is bleaker.

No more idols for me. I feel I’m too old to idolize people anyway. I was fortunate that my inclination to worship heroes and idols did not go beyond mere embarrassment and regret. Some people have it worse. Some do things against their own interests for the sake of their idols. And some are even victimized by them.

As social beings, we can’t avoid admiring other people. But, as Neil Gaiman’s downfall has taught me, it’s always good practice to look beyond superficial factors and instead make decisions based on things as boring as facts, logic and research.

*Some day, I don’t know when, I will probably go back to my old home and I will dust off all my Neil Gaiman titles to read them one last time.*

*I will revisit the guilt and frustration on Orpheus’ face as he turns his head at the last moment and loses Eurydice forever.*

*I will be haunted by the beautiful uncertainty of the ending of Tristan and Yvaine’s love story.*

*I will laugh at the adventures of Crowley and Aziraphale, footnotes and all.*

*I will be awed by the profound but nonviolent threat that Flora makes against Lex Luthor.*

*And I will once again be mind blown when Lucifer, with a smile, gives Dream the keys to Hell.*

*I will do all those and then give a long-delayed closure to one chapter of my life forever.*

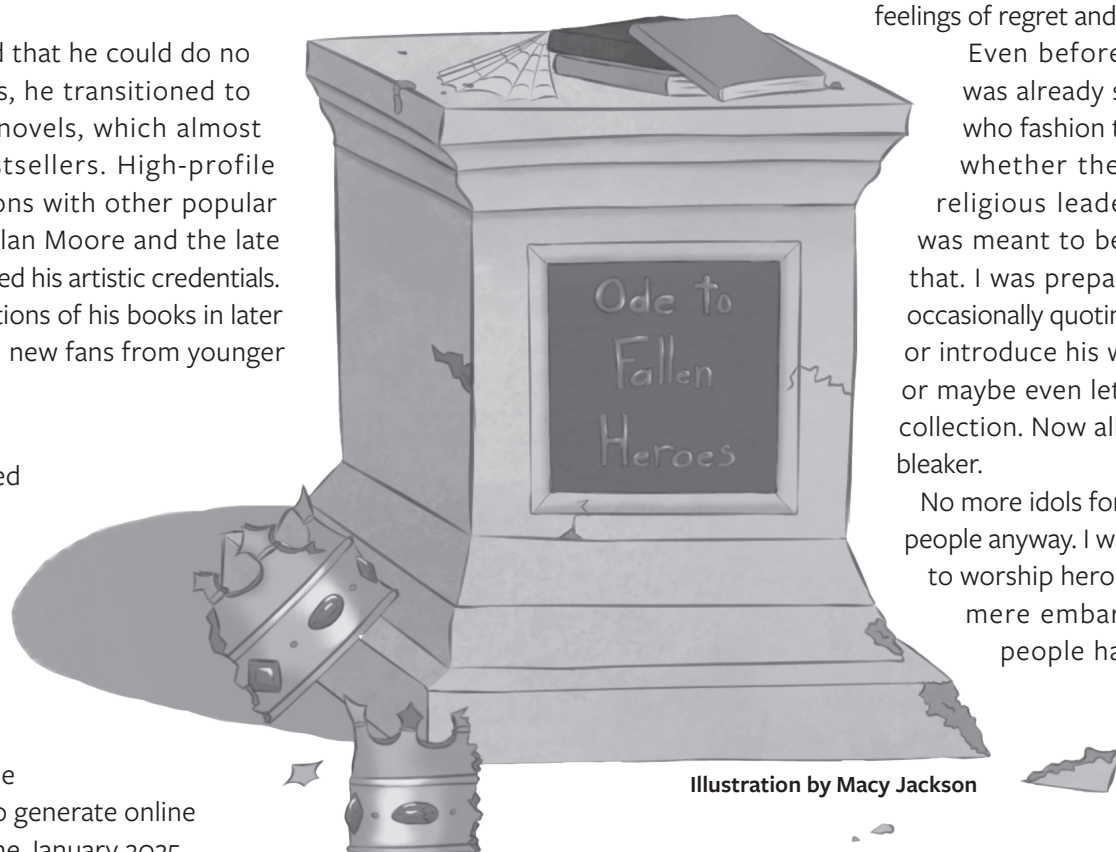


Illustration by Macy Jackson

# “We’re not going back”

## *Why 2024/25 was a turning point for the Oaks women’s volleyball program*

By Geono Aloisio

On the final day of the 2025 ACAC women’s volleyball playoffs, the NAIT Oaks took on the Briercrest Clippers. The stakes were high; an entire season of work came down to one moment. Either win the game and fifth place, or be eliminated.

In the final moments of the game, the Oaks watched as the ball sailed over the net and landed just inside the line, sealing their fate and sending them home.

Briercrest’s bench erupted in cheers and flooded the court to celebrate. NAIT gathered in a final huddle before shaking hands and returning to the bench. But as they left the gym, not a single Ook looked distraught about the loss. Instead, the team walked out of the gym with smiles and their heads held high. Because while the loss was certainly disappointing, the moment was anything but. It signified the foundation the team has quietly built over the last three years—one with championship potential.

### **From glory to uncertainty**

Making the playoffs this season was far from guaranteed—a stark contrast to the peak of the program’s success. The early 2000s marked some of the strongest years: They qualified for the post-season nine times from 2000-2013, Erin Kerschbaumer set the conference record for most kills in a season in 2005/06, and they won their first ACAC championship and made their first nationals appearance in 2013.

The team hasn’t seen the same success since then, and the last three seasons have been particularly disappointing. But after three years of hardship, the team finally made the playoffs. And while it didn’t end how the team hoped, it signalled an end to three years of hardship and return to the legacy of years past.

### **How the team returned to playoffs**

The team’s journey to success started in 2021. Long-time Head Coach Benj Heinrichs had retired. The position was vacant for the first time in eight years, opening the door for Erminia Russo-Thorpe, former Head Coach of the

program from 2010 to 2012, to take the helm.

But Russo-Thorpe was returning to a different team than the one she left in 2012. The roster was primarily first years, and only three players returned from last season. The team was essentially starting from square one.

Understandably, the team struggled.

“It’s definitely very defeating,” shared fifth-year Anna Atcheynum about how it felt in her earlier seasons. “You could see it hurt some girls, in the aspect of them just kind of wanting to leave volleyball and not continue on...I think it’s definitely hard on a program’s image, especially with recruiting trying to get girls to come here. It’s hard to recruit people to a team that’s losing.”

In two seasons, the team only won six games, and 2023/24 was much of the same. The team won five games and finished third last in the ACAC.

But there was one positive in that season: the Oaks struck gold in their 2023/24 recruiting class. Rookies Lexi Gedny and Egypt Trydal led the team in assists, and Tanisha McQueen led the team in blocks.

“When I first got there...I think we were definitely looked over,” McQueen explained. “I think one of our defining games was when we beat Briercrest, and it really showed us as a team that we can compete with these top teams.”

“It was kind of like a turning point...we felt like we were making a new culture.”

The Oaks entered 2024/25 with optimism. All the players were returning for another season, and several players were entering their third year, and the team felt like their fortunes may be changing.

### **The rise back**

The team gained the last piece of the puzzle with the 2024/25 recruiting class; adding Rachel Mallet, Courtney Webber, Emma Buyar, Casey Gilmour and Madeline Smith gave the team a strong mix of veterans and talented recruits.



Photos via NAIT Oaks

But it didn't come easy. Russo-Thorpe struggled to position the team as one to pick.

"It's taken a long time to convince top recruits, someone like Rachel Mallett...that this was a program on its way up and that, given some time and getting everybody on the same page, we were going to be competitive," Russo-Thorpe said.

And by the third week of the season, it looked like she may be right. NAIT embarked on a six-game win streak, won 18 of 19 sets and entered the winter break 6-3. Only eight games into the season, the team had already won more games than they did all last season. The team was having their most successful season under Russo-Thorpe yet.

"I always felt [playoffs] were in our reach," she explained. "I knew that if we could put it all together and if we could have that consistent level of play, day in and day and day out...with the talent we had [we were going to make it.]"

NAIT entered the winter break 6-3 and on the verge of a playoff spot. Gedney continued to dominate in assists, while Mallett and Webber led the team in kills and digs.

Russo-Thorpe was "confident but cautious" about the team's playoff chances after the break. The Oaks needed to place in the top three in their division to qualify.

They won six of their eight games in the winter term—including a five-game winning streak—and eventually landed a playoff spot with a win against Concordia. Their dream of a playoff berth was now their reality.

"Our team's goal since the beginning of the season was to make the playoffs," said Webber. "We wanted to make sure we were having fun on the court and playing the best we could no matter the result...when we clinched, we cheered so hard in the team room. We were so happy to give Anna [Atcheynum] a successful last season."

---

*"Because while the loss was certainly disappointing, the moment was anything but. It signified the foundation the team has quietly built over the last three years—one with championship potential"*

---

**The future**

The Oaks ultimately finished sixth in playoffs after losing 3-2 to Briercrest in the fifth-place game, but the result was not what this season will be remembered for. It will be remembered for the gains the team made on the court.

NAIT improved their assists totals from 533 last season to 692. They rose from dead last with 626 digs to seventh with 851. Two rookies were also highlighted for their contributions this season: Mallett won ACAC North Division Rookie of the Year, and Webber was named to the All-ACAC team.

As a team, the next step is nationals—and it doesn't seem so unattainable anymore.

"We know the little things individually, and as a team, we can improve on, but I think the main thing we are going to build on is our team bonding ...my expectations for next year are very high. I think that playoffs, as well as nationals, are very attainable," said Mallett.

The team has work to do to make their dream a reality. While the Oaks' younger players will have another year under their belts, Russo-Thorpe will still need to fill some gaps and recruit players that buy into the vision.

"We've set a level of standard and expectations...if people believe in that, and if you bring in athletes that are only accepting of a certain level of standard...I think it's exciting."

In the meantime, Russo-Thorpe has a simple message for her competitors about the program's future.

*"We are not going back."*



# 2024/25 state of the Oaks: Q+A with NAIT Athletics Director

By Geono Aloisio

The 2024/25 Oaks season is in the books. All the teams have packed up for the summer, so we sat down with NAIT's Director of Athletics and Recreation Jordan Richey to get some insight into how the department viewed this season and what they have in store for next season and beyond.



Photos via NAIT Oaks

**The Nugget:** *What were the department's expectations for NAIT sports coming into the year, and how do you feel about the results?*

**Jordan Richey:** NAIT has traditionally been a pretty strong institution in the ACAC, so I always have high expectations starting a year, especially after some of the results from last year.

We have a lot of first and second-year student-athletes, so you never really know what to expect on that. Players that have been at it for four or five years, it usually means more success because they've just played post-secondary for that long, so I wasn't really sure, but still high expectations.

Pleasantly surprised that all of our teams made playoffs, so that was great. But then you look at the number of championships won, we only had one gold medal this year, and that was in men's soccer.

It was one of those mixed seasons where everybody makes playoffs, which is fantastic. It shows the strength of an athletic program, but then only one championship. So it's a mixed bag is how I guess I would call this year.

**TN:** *9 out of the 10 teams did make the playoffs—an increase from seven last year. The women's soccer team technically made top three, but were ineligible because the playoff host is guaranteed a spot. What do you think of those stats and how they relate to the state of the program?*

**JR:** I actually am quite encouraged by the program right now. I think that means we're moving in the right direction, especially because we're young. I'm even more encouraged for next year because if we could make the playoffs with a young team without any seniors or veterans, in theory we should be better next year. Because everybody will have one year experience under their belt, and even hosting a national championship next year, there's going to be a lot of excitement, a lot of changes to our facility. So we're really looking forward to next year.





**TN:** *The golf and cross country finished their second years after a long hiatus. How do you feel year two went for both teams?*

**JR:** Well, it's a dream start, really, when both teams have gone to nationals in both their first two years. To go to nationals in year one, and then in year two, just shows the strength of our coaching staff for recruiting student athletes. Those programs weren't all recruited—some of them were just students on campus in tournament sports. It speaks to the talent we have walking the halls on campus.

**TN:** *What has the program improved on from last year, and what still needs to be improved?*

**JR:** We've had so much change within our staffing structures, and it's all to support student-athletes and our coaches. We've brought in an Athletics Operations Supervisor, and we're looking at splitting our Events Coordinator into two positions because we have so many varsity games now. We're going to be hosting the 2026 CCCA Men's Volleyball National Championship. We're actually putting a bid in to host the 2026 CCAA Men's Soccer National Championship over at the Edmonton Soccer Dome. So, we feel that we're in a position to really showcase NAIT because of the staffing we have, the student athletes, the coaches, everybody.

**TN:** *You were recognized as the ACAC and CCAA Director of the Year. How did you feel about winning that award and did it impact your ambition or plans for this season?*

**JR:** The philosophy I am trying to instill within all of our staff is that everything we do is to support student athletes. I'm not a big fan of recognition because it's not me that does this, it's our entire department. Awards validate that we are doing what we said that we're going to do, and that's support student athletes and provide student athlete opportunities.

**TN:** *So if I were to sit down with you next year to discuss how things went, what would qualify for a successful season to you?*

**JR:** I'd like to see improvement. I was very proud of all of our teams making playoffs this year, with the exception of women's soccer, who actually didn't get to compete, but they qualified. I'd like to see a bit more medals and maybe a couple of championships, as well. And I also would love to say, we just hosted one of the most successful men's volleyball national championships of all time. And obviously, the other thing that we're trying really hard on and putting some extra effort into is maintaining high GPAs for our student-athletes. We have some of the highest GPAs in the conference right now. We want to make sure that trends are in the right direction, so it's not just in the field or in the courts; it's in the classroom as well.



# mouththing OFF



## GRADUATING STUDENTS: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE NAIT MEMORY?

Photos by Skylar Boissonnault

Volunteering at NAIT during student orientation as campus tour leader and performing a dance at the Diwali event with my HipHop Dance Club family.

**-Lorraine Espanso**

*Business Administration, Marketing*

Staying on campus late with friends, each trying to finish their own project and eating junk food.

**Anubhav Nundloll**

*Business Administration,  
Management*

My favourite memory at NAIT was attending events arranged by the campus clubs, going to the Nest, meeting new people, singing and dancing.

**Jasdeep Kaur Sadhra**

*Business Administration, Marketing*

