

NAIT NUGGET

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Post-secondary panel suggests a 2 per cent tuition cap, political neutrality on Alberta's campuses

By Sara Sheydwasser

A committee assembled by the provincial government to weigh Alberta's post-secondary competitiveness has published their recommendations. The panel suggests many changes for Alberta's post-secondary institutions, with tuition and funding changes at the forefront of the report.

Led by economist Jack Mintz, the Expert Panel on Post-Secondary Institution funding and Alberta's Competitiveness released their findings in August 2025. They reviewed funding models across Canada and internationally, aiming to create recommendations that will "help government achieve the goals of the Alberta 2030 initiative."

Tuition for current students should be capped

One suggestion that could positively affect students across the province is a proposed two percent tuition cap. This would require universities, colleges and polytechnics to set tuition for first-year students. The cap would ensure no increases would be made above two per cent for the entirety of those students' time at an institution.

"It's really a big help in terms of domestic enrollment," said NAITSA Vice-President External Robin Murillo. "[We'll be] able to protect our students in terms of tuition increases, making post-secondary education affordable for our students."

Post-secondaries can, however, set tuition as high as they'd like for first-year.

More concrete funding plans needed

Provincial funding currently makes up 39 per cent of post-secondary revenue sources, the report says. Student fees and tuition make up the next largest chunk at 31 per cent.

However, government funding once made up nearly half of a post-secondary institution's revenue. With this drop in government funding, more financial burden has fallen on students, something the report admits must remain balanced.

The challenge with tuition fees is to strike the right balance between keeping tuition low to ensure accessibility and affordability for students, providing predictability so students know what to expect to pay, and at the same time, giving institutions the flexibility to increase tuition fees to cover costs and provide better quality education," it says.

Murillo hopes both the provincial and federal government can collaborate for more equitable sources of funding in the future. "It's not fair for students to always be bearing the brunt of everything," said Murillo. "We deserve a chance, we deserve an opportunity."

Alberta has the highest ratio of post-secondary institutions per capita in the country, with 5.32 post-secondaries for every one million people. This is also higher than New Zealand's average of 5.06 and Australia's of 4.80. Alberta also once had some of the highest funding for post-secondary institutions in Canada.

But with the provincial budget significantly dropping in the last five years, Alberta now has one of the lowest post-secondary budgets in Canada, with a negative compound annual growth rate of -3.5 per cent.

The committee recommends increased transparency between the government and institutions, as well as a more concrete funding plan. This would allow Alberta's post-secondaries to anticipate funding structures and plan their budgets more effectively.

Trades should continue to be a focus

Another major recommendation by the report is to continue Alberta's focus on funding apprenticeship and trades programs — which Murillo called "one of the biggest wins" of the panel's findings.

"Our [NAIT's] slogan is 'Essential to Alberta,'" says Murillo. "It's very important, not only in the province, but also for the whole country."

Protecting free speech essential in post-secondary

The report also mentions the need for institutions to stay politically neutral while fostering an environment of free speech.

Intellectual diversity is a crucial part of the post-secondary landscape, it says, and institutions should commit to the freedom of expression. While the report didn't specifically mention protecting diversity, equity and inclusion efforts on campus, it did maintain that post-secondary institutions should be "open and welcoming for all Albertans, regardless of their perspectives, backgrounds or any other grounds protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

The government of Alberta is discussing the recommendations and consulting with post-secondary institutions to determine what suggestions should be put into practice.

"In an increasingly competitive global economy, Alberta's prosperity depends on having a highly skilled, well-educated workforce," said Laura Jo Gunter, President and CEO of NAIT, in a press release from Oct. 9. "We look forward to working with the Government of Alberta on the implementation of the panel's thoughtful recommendations."

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NAITSA revamping volunteer program to help students volunteer smart

By Mitchell Janisse

At NAIT, students may be looking at ways of getting involved in giving back to their communities. There are so many ways to get involved that it can be hard to settle on one. The liberty is there to do them all, though it can be hard to balance school, work and volunteering.

Lauren Beatty, NAITSA's Volunteer Coordinator, said all her favourite memories of post-secondary involve volunteering. Before starting at NAITSA, Beatty worked in a student volunteer management position for three years.

"Volunteering is really fun," she said. "It's a really good way to immerse yourself in the post-secondary experience and create a community on campus, be more involved and create memories and try new things without too much commitment."

Scheduling is crucial

But for busy NAIT students, some of whom are juggling intense two-year programs with full class schedules, Beatty knows it can be a "time-crunch."

Even though volunteering usually requires less commitment than a job, Beatty still recommended students take their current schedules into consideration. She suggested students plan out when they'll be doing their homework and when they'll be in class or working before fitting in volunteer shifts. "Because I find if you're on campus for class, then that's the best day to volunteer because you're already here, and you're ready to learn and do some more activities because you've been in class," said Beatty.

But she's also seen an increase in student interest for weekend volunteer shifts. "I think that's a way that they're helping to manage their schedule with their busy course load," she explained.

Beatty recommended students "take on a little bit" at first and take on more as desired. "Or if you want, you can take on a lot and then see if it works, and then scale back."

Fortunately for busy students, Beatty said many of the volunteer opportunities on campus are "forgiving" and staff understand class and personal issues come first. "Everyone's very understanding and happy to accommodate however they can," she said.

Options for everyone, said NAITSA

If students are looking for ways that they can give back, but may not have lots of time to give, there are ways they can still help out through things like participating in blood drives. NAITSA had three volunteers sign up right away to help organize the event and help get students to donate blood to the blood bank. There are other opportunities, such as donating plasma, money, food or clothing.

Beatty said she's been working on researching how to "revamp" volunteering at NAITSA. "I have lots of ideas for next year," she said. "It'll be a long journey, but it'll be fun."

NAITSA already has a Volunteer Experience Path which helps to give more incentives to students who volunteer. Students move up the ranks through dedicating hours to volunteering, starting at Bronze with 10 hours, Silver at 20, Gold at 30 and finally Platinum at 50 hours.



A student discusses volunteering at NAITSA's volunteer fair this semester.

Photo by Ana Kostyrko

An Instagram reel on the Oaks Life page says that each tier has "brag-worthy rewards," along with digital badges, certificate and prize draws.

Another thing volunteering NAIT students should keep in mind is the involvement record. It is a co-curricular record that gets added onto the students' transcripts for their volunteering efforts. Students can expect to gain work experience, soft skills and communication through volunteering on campus, as well as time management and task prioritization, said Beatty.

"But I think the most meaningful thing they'll gain out of volunteering is making friends and forming a community at NAITSA or NAIT or surrounding areas," she said.

Internal NAITSA volunteer opportunities are posted on Oaks Life under the NAITSA Volunteers organization channel, but the NAITSA Volunteers page on their website also lists external opportunities with outside organizations NAITSA partners with. But Beatty also recommended students use the Oaks Life app for volunteer opportunities, especially for "unique" one-off events that might not be posted on NAITSA's volunteer webpages.

"We have a volunteer connections group chat ... the best place to be informed would probably be the app, because we send everything out in there," said Beatty. She said students can send her a connection request on the Oaks Life app and message her about volunteer opportunities directly.

Beatty said she hopes to continue cultivating a community for NAIT students with volunteer experiences, and students can expect to get more out of their time at post-secondary by participating.

"They should come to volunteering with an open mind, expecting to meet new people, make friends, try new things that they might not normally do and push themselves to grow out of their shell."

For more information on volunteering on campus, students can visit the NAITSA Volunteers page, check out the Oaks Life Volunteer page or join the Volunteer Connection group chat on the Oaks Life app.

Campus development planning underway, NAIT sourcing feedback from students and staff

By Amy St. Amand

NAIT is planning for the future of the campus, including a new hub for apprentices and trades students. The last update to the campus development plan was in 2020, and since then, a lot has happened.

NAIT has purchased land in Blatchford, the NAIT/Blatchford Market LRT station is finished and planning is underway for the new Advanced Skills Centre (ASC) — which NAIT is hoping to break ground on in 2026.

Several pop-ups were hosted on campus to get feedback from NAIT staff and students. Displays offered opportunities to engage with campus planning, including adding notes of what features the community wants to see. Students and staff could also add flag-shaped pins on a map of campus highlighting places they go to socialize, places they do and do not feel welcome and places they study.

“This is the right time to be thinking about what our future looks like for this,” said Mike High, NAIT’s VP Administration and Chief Financial Officer. “That ends up helping to inform things like the Advanced Skills Centre, but also inform things like potential for residences and other investments around campus.”

“It’s about creating identity and belonging and celebrating the trades.”

High explained that even though many students may have graduated by the time the changes are implemented, their feedback is still valuable.

NAIT’s “life cycle of relationship” with its students is different; in traditional universities, students will complete their four-year degree and rarely return for more education.

But High explained that at NAIT, many students complete a diploma or certificate, then come back to reskill later in life.

“Many of our students, this is maybe the first start of their relationship with us. But they will come back to campus at some point in time and benefit from their contributions now.”

ASC brings together 29 programs in collaborative space

The project is still in the early stages of development, but NAIT’s goal is to bring different trades together to collaborate on projects, like they would on real job sites.

“HVAC and carpenters and electricians are working on top of one another like they have to do in the real world, and think about the consequences of their work on the next trade that comes in,” said High.

“It’s to just think of this as a design and planning project. It’s also very much an academic change project. It’s a campus development project.”

NAIT estimates they’ll be able to train 50 per cent more students in the ASC, bringing their totals to almost 15,000 students each year.

High said that academic chairs have already started thinking about how this could work — from discussing how projects could work when they aren’t limited by the size of the room, to discussing the capacity for lectures versus the intimacy of labs.

The planning extends outside the classroom to things like traffic, parking and food services. “We’ve done a parking study, we’ve done thinking about how



A staff member leaves feedback during one of the engagement sessions.

Photo by Amy St. Amand

traffic would be routed, where entrances should be,” said High. “It would be very tempting to just think of ASC as one building, but the campus development plan actually is even more crucial to shake through all the consequences of those types of things.”

NAIT plans for the majority of the space to be educational; in the presentation at the Aug. 28 Board of Governors meeting, the space was divided into 76 per cent dedicated to labs, nine per cent towards community and student-focused spaces, six per cent each for faculty/staff spaces and classrooms and three per cent for support spaces.

“It’s about creating identity and belonging and celebrating the trades that I think sometimes doesn’t happen.”

But student touch points and community spaces are still vital, said High. If students have vibrant experiences on campus now, they’ll share it with their friends or family. “Later on, when they’re employers they remember the great experience they had as a group and think about hiring here,” High explained.

“It’s about creating identity and belonging and celebrating the trades that I think sometimes doesn’t happen.”

NAIT hopes to have foundations in place by 2026-27, with a completion date of 2030. And while the current economy does pose additional challenges — like funding — NAIT believes the building is necessary now.

“We have a 46,000 skilled trade shortage that we’re going to be facing in the province by the 2030s or so ... we kind of can’t build this fast enough to be able to support those broader [provincial] priorities.”

“You want to build roads, you want to build schools, you want to build hospitals, you want to build pipelines, you kind of need the trades that are going to come out of this building.”

What's going on with Honorlock?

By Bradley Houston and Alleah Boisvert

Have you struggled with Honorlock? Some students and instructors from the JR Shaw School of Business have been experiencing issues with the new technology. It even happened to me in October — the majority of my classroom were unable to write their midterms in-class because Honorlock wasn't working correctly.

Honorlock is an e-proctoring software intended to minimize academic misconduct. NAIT's Learning Technology and AI Strategy department, in consultation with NAIT Students' Association (NAITSA), rolled out Honorlock and another e-proctoring software, Schoolyear, in August as a pilot to students in NAIT's business program to replace Respondus LockDown Browser.

According to Mark Schneider, Director of Learning Technology and AI Strategy, NAIT chose to move away from Respondus after an increase in academic integrity and student privacy concerns, but also to maintain the value of NAIT credentials and improve student experiences. Because Respondus is fully-automated, Schneider said students "weren't being given fair opportunity to write exams or to explain their circumstance."

"There's quite a bit of bad press around these full-automated solutions with regards to bias, particularly racial bias and religious bias," said Schneider. In contrast to Respondus, Honorlock also has live human support 24/7 all-year round. The primary benefit when using Honorlock, Schneider said, is that students "can engage with a human right now on a live chat that's not just an AI" by visiting the Honorlock website.

"Instructors shouldn't be turning on screen recording and webcam monitoring for an in-person exam."

While Honorlock is meant to be an improvement from Respondus, students shared concerns online in the r/NAIT subreddit. In a post titled "Honourlock is garbage," one user said they could have "failed an exam" because of a submission glitch. "My teacher basically told me it was my fault and there was nothing I could do," another user said.

"My computer's a little bit old and my battery ain't the best, but usually if I'm at 100 per cent, it lasts like me the whole day. But one Honorlock test just drained my whole battery," Gurshan Brar, a first-year accounting student, told *the Nugget*. And there usually aren't enough outlets in classrooms to fix issues like this during in-person assessments.

"The last thing we want is more stress on students when it just comes to taking their exam," said NAITSA President Lilly Houcher. "Both instructors and students need to have knowledge on it and it needs to be implemented correctly in order for it to work on the student side," said Houcher, who attended software consultation meetings with Learning Technology in the springtime. "But if there's holes or gaps in the implementation, it could be very frustrating for students."

So if Honorlock is a better piece of software, why all the issues?

According to Schneider, some of the issues with Honorlock come from where it is being used. "We haven't actually noticed a lot of technical issues with students associated with remote exams," he said.

In fact, Honorlock wasn't meant to be used for in-person exams at all. "Schoolyear is intended to be used for in-person exams and Honorlock was intended to be used for online exams," said Schneider. He explained the plan to run Honorlock and Schoolyear concurrently didn't go as planned since "some

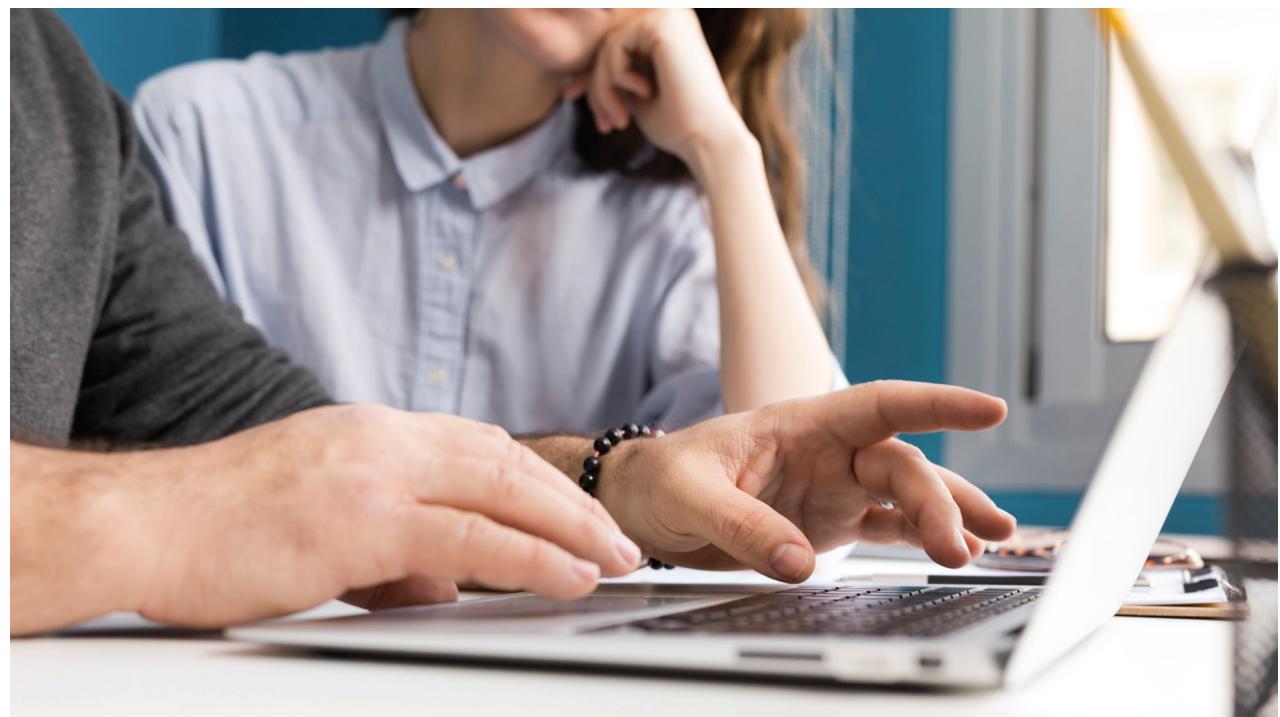


Photo via Freepik

instructors developed a preference" towards using Honorlock for both types of exams.

"Instructors shouldn't be turning on screen recording and webcam monitoring for an in-person exam." This takes up a lot of bandwidth and makes connection difficult during assessments.

"If the screen is being recorded and the webcam is turned on, when the student is connected to the public Wi-Fi, we have noticed a significant disruption to student experiences in those cases."

Students using NAIT's public Wi-Fi during exams is another problem. When completing high-stakes assessments, students "aren't connected to eduroam or don't know how to connect to eduroam," he said. Students can sign into eduroam, a secure Wi-Fi network developed for the education community to use, by using their NAIT student email and associated password to sign into the network.

Students have still seen some issues when taking remote exams, though. Schneider said it could be because students aren't taking the Honorlock practice set-up tests to remedy issues before exams start. "That's our number one problem, by far and large," he said.

Instructors were provided training on Honorlock on June 25 and Aug. 26, but Houcher thinks there still needs to be more knowledge shared with students and instructors.

"I think majority of the times that there are problems, it does come from instructors potentially not setting it up properly," she said.

While the support seems to be there, instructors seem to at least perceive that it hasn't been communicated, and now students are caught in the middle.

Still, students like Brar acknowledge e-proctoring technology must be used to combat academic misconduct during asynchronous exams. "I really like it at home assignments because ... obviously everyone's going to cheat at home, right?"

If you're having issues with Honorlock as a student, Schneider recommends using Honorlock's online support. As well, the NAIT ITS help desk provides support Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Learning Technology and AI Strategy department encourages NAIT students to fill out the e-proctoring technologies survey, which is available to JRSSB students on Brightspace until the end of the fall term.

"Our team, Learning Technology, is committed to gathering the feedback of students because our number one focus is on the student experience," they said.

CLUBS CORNER

Indigenous Student Council returns after 5 year hiatus

By Rafael Luis Flores

After an absence of five years, an organization that specifically caters to Indigenous students' interests is now once again active and visible in the NAIT campus clubs scene. The Indigenous Students' Council at NAIT (ISCN) aims to "[create] a welcoming space for Indigenous students to connect, share and feel supported on campus," according to their Oaks Life profile.

Amber Duffield, ISCN's Vice-President Operations and a Bachelor of Business Administration student, added that the ISCN isn't only for Indigenous students — Duffield also wants to create "connections between that community and non-Indigenous students as well."

While they work closely with the Nîsôhkamâtôtân Centre, and have a staff member of the centre as their club adviser, Duffield clarified that they aren't officially affiliated. They are a student club, with student executives.

This early in ISCN's resurgence, their efforts are focused on community-building. Activities like study sessions and board games make up their regular events, while they find times that work for their members.

"The Indigenous students at NAIT are spread across so many programs ... the biggest barrier right now is honestly just finding a time that works for a lot of people to get together at the same time," Duffield explained.

Eventually, Duffield said they plan to introduce events that promote greater engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Engagement with the non-Indigenous community is perhaps reflective of current realities. A lot has happened during the five years that the organization was dormant.

First, COVID-19 happened, and this was immediately followed by a rapid increase of international students which peaked in 2023. Despite new study permits being scaled back by the federal government in 2024, there are still many international students who are active in the NAIT community.

That also means there is now a much larger percentage of the school's population who may not be familiar with the importance of the Indigenous community in Canadian life. They might be curious but unsure on how to learn more or where to engage. Duffield had a simple piece of advice: to sit down and talk with an Indigenous student.

"For someone that is non-Indigenous who is curious, but maybe hesitant



Dancers perform at NAIT's Treaty Days in September 2025.

Photo by Mathieu Durnford

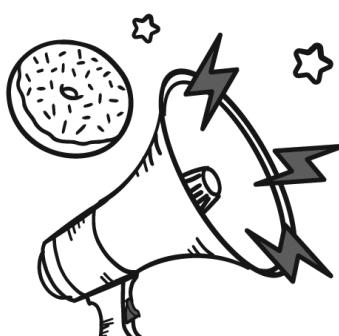
because they don't want to step on toes, most of us are very eager to share our culture," she said.

"The best way is by speaking with someone with lived experience. And the strongest connection between people for that, in my experience, is outside of formal settings."

Attending ISCN's meetings or other events at the Nîsôhkamâtôtân Centre is another great way to learn more. "And learn beyond what the perception of Canadian culture is internationally, which from my understanding is a very whitewashed perception, and take that as an opportunity to ask questions to learn more," she added.

This eagerness to share their culture is central to the ISCN's engagement efforts. In the future, Duffield hopes to host recurring events, like beading or ribbon skirt workshops. She also expressed excitement for club growth and the opportunity to create connections with across campus.

For more information on the ISCN and its events, visit the club's Oaks Life page.



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Women's only strength class helps NAIT students build confidence and relieve stress

By Pia Vistro

NAIT's women-only full body fitness class is challenging the idea that the gym is just for cardio. While cardio is great for endurance and heart health, it's not the full picture — and Sandy Babiuk, a Recreation Coordinator at NAIT and Instructor of the class, often sees women ignore strength training in favour of cardio.

"It's often overlooked by women ... but strength training is so important," she said. "There's something kind of incredible about seeing yourself get stronger."

Babiuk noticed that many women were interested in strength training, but felt intimidated about where to start. "Our goal is to create a safe, supportive and fun environment where women can build confidence and strength at their own pace," she explained.

For women, strength training is often overlooked or misunderstood, which Babiuk said can happen for a number of reasons, like upbringing. "It also depends where you're from, what your background is. In a lot of the countries, [strength training is] not really a thing women even do."

Another common misconception is that working out is only about losing weight. Babiuk shared that she's often been questioned why she works out.

"I come from a culture where women don't work out that much ... I would get questions like, 'Why do you need to work out? You don't need to lose any weight.'"

For her, though, fitness has never been about appearance, but about feeling stronger and managing stress. Strength training, she emphasized, is for everyone, especially women who want to improve their overall well-being and feel empowered.

"It improves bone density, especially as you get older. It supports metabolism as well, and it helps prevents injuries," said Babiuk.

Movement 'can do wonders'

Many women find empowerment in seeing measurable progress, whether that's holding a plank longer or lifting a heavier weight than before. "If you couldn't lift a 10-pound dumbbell a week before, but you can now, it's just kind of empowering. You have this sense of success."

Strength training also helps reduce stress, making it an ideal outlet during busy or overwhelming times.

For Babiuk, strength training helped her adjust to a new culture and build confidence after moving to Canada. "I worked out because it helped me deal with stress better. There's a lot of challenges when you're here from a different country. You don't know the culture or language that well," she said. "It was a way for me to de-stress. I just felt better about myself."

Now, she encourages students to see movement as a form of self-care and a healthy way to manage stress, a habit that can start with something as simple as showing up to a beginner class.

"Student life is hectic, which makes it

that much more important to make time for yourself," she said. Even one class a week can make a difference. "Movement can do wonders."

Starting is the first step

If you're new to lifting, the key is to start small and stay consistent. Babiuk recommended training about three times per week, alternating between muscle groups and allowing time to rest. She noted that the women-only class combines strength, cardio and core work for a well-rounded approach.

Regardless of your experience and fitness level, proper form is essential. Babiuk emphasized, "You have to start with the proper form because that's what's going to give you the confidence and the strength that you need to go heavier."

Poor form, she added, often leads to injuries, one of the main reasons many women lose motivation or stop training altogether.

Babiuk also made NAIT's recreation center's goal abundantly clear: to create a safe, supportive environment where women can build strength without fear of judgment or lack of experience. "We want to eliminate those barriers and make the gym welcoming."

If you're unsure where to start, Babiuk strongly suggested reaching out to NAIT recreation staff. "Come talk to one of the rec staff. We can point you in the right direction," she said.

Over time, she's watched participants not only build strength but also develop a sense of belonging and confidence that extends beyond the gym.

NAIT offers numerous other fitness classes, which are free for students who pay the athletics and recreation fee. Women-only fitness runs once a week on Tuesdays from 12:05 p.m. to 12:50 p.m. in S112. Find the full list of classes on Oaks Life.



Babiuk leads the class in weightless arm raises.

Photo by Noura Eltinay

International Network Engineering Technology student goes all in, hits summer job jackpot with AGLC

By Rafael Luis Flores

To a casual observer, it might appear strange that international students with Bachelor's degrees and years of work experience in their home countries would go all the way to Canada for another degree. It even comes across as counterintuitive if one considers that many apply for lower credential programs, like a diploma or certificate, in the same field.

While some international students do this mainly as an immigration pathway (let's get that out of the way), others come to Canada to upgrade their professional qualifications by earning an additional credential and gaining valuable exposure to the Canadian job market.

One such international student is Mary Jean Ompod, a second-year Network Engineering Technology diploma student from the Philippines.

Before arriving in Canada, she already had a computer engineering degree and spent nine years working as a Network Analyst for Accenture, one of the world's top management consulting firms.

Last month, Ompod was featured in a LinkedIn post by Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) describing the work she did configuring VLT machine switches and making wiring diagrams last summer.

“My bachelor's degree, mostly it was just theory. But I've learned a lot more in NAIT because we have a lab. We have our own switches, the routers, and we can play with it. So that's why you will really learn how to configure and make things work.”

Ompod initially applied for a job with AGLC that was related to soldering — bonding metal surfaces together, sometimes for electrical components. “It was not very related to what I'm studying right now,” she explained, but being experienced and certified in soldering, she applied anyway.

Weeks later, her department chair sent an email encouraging students to apply for more jobs with AGLC. “I saw that there were a lot of positions open, not just the one I applied. There were [jobs] like desktop support, network support, everything. There's a lot for students. And it was the last day of application,” said Ompod.

She applied for three more jobs with AGLC, and was accepted for the Network Analyst role. She never got interviewed for the soldering job.

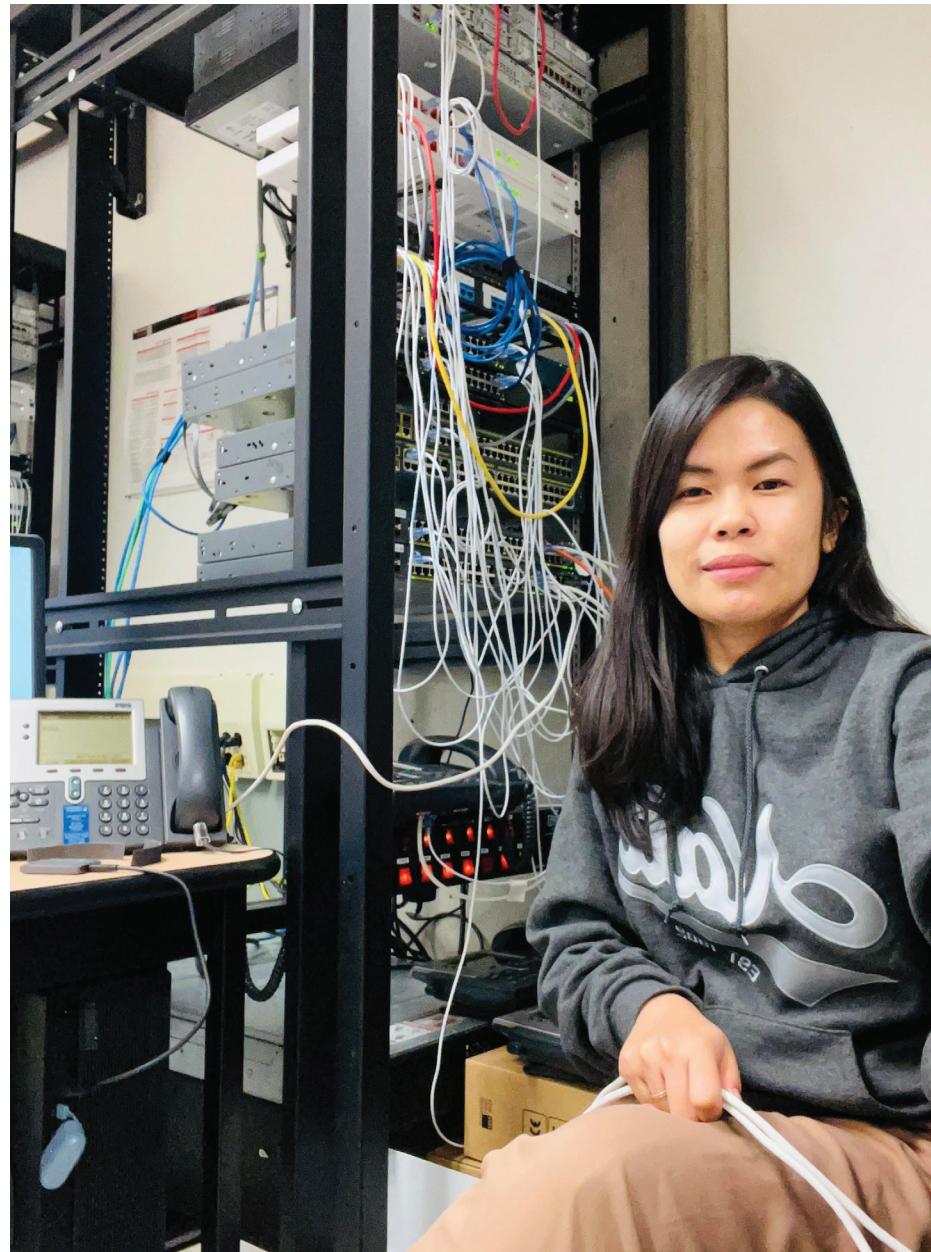
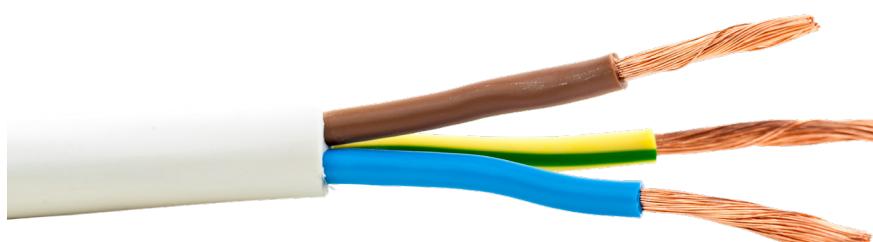
Instead, Ompod's work involved maintaining network connectivity in AGLC's facilities — including casinos.

“But not the regular computers that we use in casinos, but the VLT machines or the slot machines,” she said.

“So network connectivity, meaning it should connect to the internet, connect to the servers, to everything. Or simply saying, the machine should function as it should be.”

“Because, you know, if a machine is down, they lose money,” said Ompod. Her work also ensured winners would be properly connected to the database.

Ompod enjoyed the hands-on nature of her experience as a Network Analyst at AGLC.



Mary Jean Ompod during her summer job.

Photo supplied

In the Philippines, her work involved checking an already existing network and making recommendations based on the logs.

With her summer job at AGLC, however, she had to configure the actual network, which involves a higher skill level than checking logs.

At AGLC, “the circuit or the network is not existing, so you have to configure. You're the one configuring the switch,” she said. “That's what I lack[ed] in the Philippines. I [didn't] know how to configure. I can only read logs but I [didn't] know how to do it from scratch and make it function.”

Ompod views her Network Engineering Technology diploma program at NAIT as an upgrade to the bachelor's degree she earned in the Philippines more than a decade ago. “My bachelor's degree, mostly it was just theory. But I've learned a lot more in NAIT because we have a lab. We have our own switches, the routers, and we can play with it. So that's why you will really learn how to configure and make things work.”

Ompod advises NAIT students interested in summer positions to apply for posted opportunities anyways, even if they are not sure they qualify. When Ompod applied for the AGLC jobs, she was unsure of her chances. “I checked the requirements. Even me, I didn't think I can get into this requirement. But I just tried. So that's what got me into it, because I tried.”

Students create art for academic rights

By Amy St. Amand

Hosted by NAITSA's Student Academic Rights Advisor, a recent contest asked students to create a piece of art that reflected the theme of 'Your Rights, Your Voice.' Two students walked away with a prize. Jahnae Hudson, a second-year student taking Human Resources in the Business Administration program, won first place with her painting called *We Speak, We Listen*. In second place, Ericka Joyce Elimia created a piece of digital art called *Rooted in Rights, Growing Through Learning*.

Both students said the longest part of their process was developing a concept. "I spent a lot of time thinking about visually representing the academic rights based on my perspective," said Elimia. Also a business student, Elimia used the graphic design platform Canva to create her poster. "My goal was only to participate and see if my design could effectively convey what academic rights mean."

Hudson used acrylic paint in her submission and said she saw the contest as an opportunity to "express [her] perspective on inclusion, equality and empowerment."

"I believe art has the power to communicate our ideas that words alone sometimes can't ... I wanted my piece to remind others that our voices matter."

For Elimia, the shock of winning validated her desire to create art. She's been interested in art for many years, but seeing the contest poster made her want to start again.

"I was honestly so surprised! I didn't expect to win at all," she said of the second-place finish. Hudson expressed similar shock at winning, saying, "it felt rewarding to know that [her] message resonated with others."

Both Hudson and Elimia walked away with monetary prizes; Hudson won \$200, and Elimia won \$100.

"This experience has encouraged me to keep using art as a way to inspire



Hudson poses with her winning painting.

Photo supplied

conversations about rights, inclusion, and self-expression," said Hudson about the win.

"It's been both an honor and a motivation to keep growing as an artist."

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AI's hidden casualty: Entry-level careers at risk for students

By Ibrahim Basin

The AI revolution is reshaping industries at an unprecedented pace, but new research suggests that the biggest impact isn't mass layoffs, but the quiet disappearance of entry-level jobs. For students at NAIT preparing to graduate, this shift raises serious questions about how to start their careers in an AI-driven world.

According to a Harvard study from September 2025, companies that adopted AI have reduced junior hiring by 22 per cent in the last two years. Wholesale and retail industries saw a 40 per cent drop in entry-level hires per quarter.

The reason behind the hiring decline may have to do with AI's phenomenal ability to automate repetitive and routine tasks. In an October 2025 article by the Globe and Mail, Western University's Chief AI Officer Mark Daley said these tasks are typically the ones handled by new hires. Employers save time and money, but this is at the cost of shrinking opportunities for students seeking their first job out of school.

Mihiri Kamiss, a NAIT Digital Media and IT graduate, was in her second year at NAIT when AI tools like ChatGPT "blew up," she said. For Kamiss, the change felt sudden and unsupported. "I feel like the school and my instructors and the program really did not give me a warning about how this would shift the market. I kinda had to figure that out on my own," she said. "And it's not like they could've changed the curriculum around AI just in the blink of an eye overnight to accommodate for that change."

Kamiss, who took the Computer Software Development concentration, knows this is affecting more than just retail. After she finished her program in 2024, she was hired at a tech start-up. Ten months later, she was laid off. "The AI experts are kinda misleading the population and saying, 'Hey, it's not gonna take your job, you don't have to worry,' when obviously it is," she said.

An August 2025 study by Stanford University found that occupations more exposed to generative AI, like software, have seen a 13 per cent decline in employment amongst workers aged 22 to 25. But the study also suggests employment declines are "concentrated in occupations where AI is more likely

to automate, rather than augment, human labor."

While the fast-moving changes to industry due to AI can feel discouraging, experts in Canada think the young generation entering the workforce can overcome this by proving they know how to utilize AI to improve workflow — and Kamiss agrees.

"I really tried to drive home my use of AI and machine learning concepts within my projects," Kamiss explained. "If employers see that you're rejecting AI, then that's kind of a red flag, because they want you to be as efficient as possible."

"I think creativity is still valuable and ironically, embracing AI tools is your best bet for getting a job right now," said Kamiss. "You need to embrace AI in your work or you're gonna get booted out." Kamiss also said she thinks employers have a higher standard for new hires because of AI, so the expectations are "sky high" for junior workers.

The concern for entry-level workers could lie in the workforce structure itself. In the article by the Globe and Mail, Mount Royal University professor Leda Stawnychko suggests employers need to rethink the way they manage young talent. "New grads have far more to offer than just grinding through routine tasks," said Stawnychko.

But the AI shift needs to be either embraced in post-secondary programs to meet industry expectations, or the industry needs to balance between efficiency, valuing "human work" and rejecting AI-generated "slop" products, as Kamiss puts it.

For some NAIT graduates, the first step into a career may no longer be as simple as applying for an entry-level role. And by combining human creativity with AI skills, students can still carve out a place in the workforce — it just won't be as easy as it used to be. "The market's tough right now and you shouldn't beat yourself up over it if you're not getting a job," Kamiss said. "Networking is your best friend."



'Strong and free' doesn't feel the same

Editorial by Avalina Zenari

I've always wanted to be born in another decade. So when I heard that the iconic "Wild Rose Country" licence plates, that have been a consistent sight throughout Alberta's since the 1980s, will be replaced by a new design, of course I was sad.

Alberta plates have gone through a variety of colors and makes, but the current look has stayed consistent for more than 40 years. In my frequent trips to the thrift store, I shop for things phased out by new ways of living and have often come across old licence plates — retired pieces of history once thought to last forever. The provincial plates are a constant in a world of evolving motor vehicles and modes of transportation. Quite frankly, the announcement by the provincial government took me by surprise. I'm sure you've heard the saying, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.'

If I were to accept this bypass of historical routine, I have a few concerns about this new design.

I dislike the change in slogan. The new licence plates will read "Strong and Free" instead of the popular nickname for the province, "Wild Rose Country."

The old slogan was meaningful because it paid tribute to Alberta's official floral emblem — a plant used by Indigenous peoples in traditional medicine and

ceremony. The wild rose is also a strong and resilient flower, capable of braving the flurry of changing conditions that our province is known for.

This strength has translated into a metaphor to represent Albertans, who in my opinion, have an immense amount of perseverance and grit that make us stand out as leaders and hard workers. The wild rose iconography will still remain on the plate with a slightly different look, but it will never be the same to me without the original slogan.

The good news? At least part of the choice will be in the hands of Albertans themselves. The new licence plate design will be chosen based on the results of an online poll. The selection is reduced to two designs: "Ranching Cowboys with Pumpjack" and "Moraine Lake" designs.

My choice centres on representation. I can't pick the slogan, but when I imagine what best represents our province, the prairies come to mind. I don't believe that the Canadian Rockies capture enough of the essence of Alberta. The beautiful mountainscape is only a small portion of the totality of the province, encompassing only 7.4 percent of the province's land.

As an Albertan who was born and raised in the central prairies, my allegiance lies with a design that offers a broader scope — both in visuals and slogan.

Am I too old for school?

Editorial by Samantha Lajuenesse

We used to be too cool for school, but now we might be too old for school — especially online school. As older students, online learning can be difficult. I spent my childhood in the classroom, face to face with my peers, teachers and the workload. The only time I worked from home was when we would have leftover schoolwork, or if our teachers were just cruel.

I remember banging the erasers for the chalkboard and seeing my first whiteboard. I was in the first classroom in our school to get a Smartboard, and good golly, was that an adventure. We barely had any schoolwork at all that day because the teacher didn't know how to work it. Eventually, we gave up and just used a dry-erase marker.

But now, as students again for the first time in a decade and a half, some of us are the ones navigating software that we've never seen before. Sometimes we're the same age as our instructors — and much older than our classmates. Thankfully, schoolwork seems to have gotten easier, but how do we do school when we need to learn how to use new digital technology? Even just learning how to work on a computer can be stressful.

Working alongside our younger counterparts is an eye-opening experience. Many came into post-secondary fresh out of high school. They haven't had years, sometimes decades, between education.

Some of us have been working for so long, we forget what it's like not to be in charge, to ask questions again instead of answering them. Some of the students coming into post-secondary had a head start learning how to do

online school because of COVID-19. Even though they lost out on many in-person experiences, the familiarity with online learning is an advantage. How do we compete?

For example, my classmates started a Discord group to communicate. I had never even heard of it. Downloading the app and learning about it just so I could ask my fellow classmates to clarify something the unfamiliar, asynchronous instructor said took me almost an entire day; a day some might have spent away from work, kids, household chores and other schoolwork.

To my younger readers: can you imagine asking for help learning technology from someone in junior high (or even elementary) just so you can do your schoolwork? For some older learners, that's what it's like. You are entering the adult world, and technology is growing with you. Meanwhile, education surpasses your senior counterparts who are just trying to relearn their place in this world.

I thought online school would be as easy as clicking the thing and answering the questions. But I spent the entire first week of school struggling to meet deadlines because I could not, for the life of me, figure out how to work Brightspace. Even with all the tutorials, I was lost. Thankfully, my 12-year-old nephew showed me where to find individual assignments.

When you see someone walking through the halls with a backpack who looks like they could be a student's parent, just remember: they might be an older student who feels like they just lost their reading glasses.

I finally tried NAIT's climbing wall — and yes, my legs shook

By Ibrahim Basin

I'd watched people glide up NAIT's wall for months while I was stuck to the treadmills. One afternoon, I entered the gym and glanced at the wall. My gut said that today was the day — and people say listen to your gut. Well, on this day that is precisely what I did. I grabbed rental shoes from the front desk and entered the climbing area. I went right into it.

Moving all four limbs at the same time was not as easy as I thought, I found out that day. But we humans sometimes do better than expected under pressure or the fear of embarrassment, and that is what happened with me then, too; I did better than expected. Slowly, I rose up and up.

About two-thirds up, I made the classic mistake: I looked down. The floor suddenly felt faraway, and my balance wobbled. I landed (faceup, thankfully) onto the soft crash mats, and just lay there listening to my heart slow down. The landing was forgiving, and so was the room. The climber there smiled and said, "Try it again." So, I did.

This time I used my brain more than my adrenaline and took the easy way up. When my hand finally touched the top, the feeling was fizzy and pleasantly simple: I did a hard thing I didn't think I could do.

After one session, I get why a climbing wall belongs on campus. Climbing narrows your attention to a single problem — you can't think about midterms when you're deciding where to put your foot. Such a thought alone is enough to throw you off. Research has shown that rock climbing improves cognitive abilities like focus, but a 2025 study claims indoor climbing programs are also associated with meaningful reductions in depressive symptoms. Another recent study reported anxiety reductions in those who rock climb — many participants found it even more effective than therapy or medications. The evidence is still growing, but the signal is positive.

Climbing blends pulling, pressing and leg drive. Studies show it involves the heart and lungs and builds strength, especially in fingers, shoulders and hips. Research published in a sports medicine journal from 2003 found oxygen use



A student climbing during one of the Learn to Climb events.

Photo by Naazdeep Kaur

and heart rate rise with route difficulty — for beginner climbers, this is the kind of moderate-to-vigorous effort that counts toward Canada's guideline of 150 minutes per week for adults.

The social part matters more than I expected. You may not find many people at NAIT's climbing wall, but the ones you see there will probably become your friends. This was my case — when interests meet, connection follows.

If you want to try it, the wall is inside the Fitness Weight Centre, and NAIT Athletics and Recreation has been hosting Learn to Climb sessions throughout the semester.

Was trying it on my own easy? Not really. Like every other thing, it takes time. But it was challenging in a way that felt safe and immediately rewarding. As a stress reliever, climbing forced my brain into the present. As a campus amenity, the climbing wall is a win. It's accessible, skill-building and just fun enough that I'm already planning to go back and do it again.

Ooks golf stalls at nationals again, coach says team is ‘getting better year by year’



Golf nationals in 2024

Photo via ACAC

By Geono Aloisio

The NAIT golf team wrapped up its season at the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) National Golf Championships in Medicine Hat on Oct. 17 with another finish near the bottom of the standings for both the men's and women's sides. In the three consecutive years they've qualified, neither team has placed higher than second-last — and it may seem like the program's progress has ground to a halt. But while the growth may be small, there is still growth, and the team has no plans to slow down.

Young program improving, but still room for growth

NAIT's golf program was revived in 2023 and achieved notable success in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC) in its first three seasons.

The program has won four collective silvers and bronzes and finished first at a tournament this season for the first time since the program's revival. The coaching has received accolades, too. Head Coach Tyler Leicht won ACAC Golf Coach of the Year in 2023 and 2025.

But despite that success, the young program has yet to medal at nationals. Leicht explained that he has seen minor, steady improvements from his teams each time they have competed at nationals, even though their standings have remained the same.

“Looking at it from just a surface level, we haven't really improved, but looking at our team scores ... we've consistently gotten better by a significant margin year by year,” Leicht said. “So that gap between us being in eighth place to what it looks like being in sixth, to fifth to fourth place, that margin is slowly getting smaller.”

“Looking at how our team scored in its first nationals to its second, to its third ... we've improved by almost thirty strokes.”

The men's team shot a combined +109 over par at nationals this year — their best results yet — down from +161 in 2024 and +144 in 2023. While the

ACAC women's team, which has had one NAIT women's golfer representing the school in each of the past three seasons, has seen fluctuations in its score year over year: Ava Radke shot +134 in 2025, Ella Dolan managed +72 in 2024 and Michaella Kibblewhite got +81 in 2023.

ACAC golf has struggled in the past

For NAIT, and for the other ACAC teams, competing with the “powerhouses in the CCAA” has been a struggle, Leicht noted.

Only three ACAC men's teams have won a medal since 2004 — SAIT in 2025, Medicine Hat in 2021 and Mount Royal in 2009. Meanwhile, the men's team from Ontario's Humber Polytechnic has finished in the top three 16 times, including nine national wins in that same time span.

Given the ACAC's history of limited success at the national level, it may take some time before the Ooks can field a team to compete nationally.

“It took their [SAIT's] program just over 10 years to do that,” Leicht said. “So hopefully for us, we can narrow that gap a little bit and not have to wait 10 years, but definitely kind of something to strive for.”

The Ooks have demonstrated their ability to be competitive at the ACAC level and build up to the national stage with small year-over-year improvements. Their next goal of achieving a gold at the ACAC championships may be challenging, but the foundation they've built signals a bright future for the Ooks.

“We're looking at some pieces that are going to help our team continue to grow and succeed,” said Leicht. “[Gold] is still a goal for our program. I know everyone's hungry for that.”

“Sometimes it only takes one person to make a big difference ... we're excited, and I'm excited and I'm very much looking forward to the future.”

Men's soccer team wins medal at nationals for first time since 2021

By Geono Aloisio

The Oaks men's soccer team won the bronze medal at the 2025 Canadian Collegiate Athletics Association (CCAA) Men's Soccer Championships in Saint-Lambert, Que., on Nov. 8.

NAIT defeated the Conestoga Condors in penalty kicks after the game was tied 4-4 through double overtime.

The game started rough for the Oaks, who found themselves down 2-0 to Conestoga within the first 20 minutes. NAIT's Jameson Kiezik quickly turned that around, though, and got the blue and gold on the board at minute 30.

Kiezik kick-started a run of Oaks goals that gave the team a 3-2 lead 67 minutes in after Ranjeet Brar and Ryak Kabashi found the back of the net. However, that lead did not last long.

The Condors scored a minute later to tie the game at three apiece. The goal proved to be a crucial one, as neither team could break the deadlock before the 90 minute mark.

Then, Kabashi appeared to be the game's hero when he scored for NAIT at 110 minutes. However, Conestoga would delay the Oaks' celebration when the Condors scored a goal at 120 minutes, forcing the game to penalty kicks.

NAIT's goalkeeper, Parys Ona MacArthur, shut out the Condors in all three of

their penalty kick attempts.

Matthew Herbut, Lungelo Napa and Vladyslav Kozachok all scored for the Oaks and sealed the win to secure the bronze medal — the program's first at nationals since 2021.

The Oaks started off with a loss in the opening game of the tournament on Nov. 5. They fell 2-1 to the Saint-Lambert Cavaliers, who would go on to finish second in the tournament. The team quickly rebounded with wins against the CMU Blazers on Nov. 6 and the UKC Blue Devils on Nov. 7 to clinch their spot in the bronze medal game.

Winning the bronze medal will cap off a very memorable season for the men's soccer team, which included their second consecutive Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC) championship title, a 25-game ACAC undefeated streak and four players being named to the All-Conference team.

NAIT's men's team will also be guaranteed a spot back at nationals next fall as the host school, marking their third consecutive appearance in the tournament.

In the meantime, the Oaks will get prepared for the futsal season in the winter semester. The men's season starts on Jan. 31.

Making Canada proud: Blue Jays' World Series run was pure magic

Editorial by Emmett Moore

If you had told me last year that the Blue Jays were going to participate in the best World Series in recent times, I would never have believed you. I've been watching this team since 2022, and it has been rocky.

But Alex Rodriguez, Hall of Famer and one of the greatest American hitters of all time, said it best about the Jays' recent World Series Loss: "Absolutely heartbroken for the Blue Jays... an incredible year from top to bottom, and they did it all in a beautiful, classy way."

He goes on to say that the Blue Jays outplayed the Dodgers in every single metric — the Jays outscored the Dodgers 34-26, their batting average was almost a full percentage higher, and the Jays had eight less strike outs than the Dodgers.

And on top of it, the Blue Jays played the best baseball that fans have seen in years. It was pure, enjoyable fun, making insane plays on defense and offense while Canada watched in excitement.

Game 7 of this World Series was the most watched Rogers broadcast ever, they reported. It reached an average viewership of 10.9 million viewers, and overall, 18.5 million Canadians tuned in. That's 45 per cent of the country.

The Blue Jays also never looked out of the fight, battling for a total of 74 innings and reduced Shohei Ohtani's impact as much as a team can. I'd walk him again just for the joke of it.

And the best joke of all, the Blue Jays dominated Ohtani enough that the best player in the world had to stand to the side as fellow national Yoshinobu Yamamoto hoisted the World Series MVP. Forcing the supporting cast to win the game is the best strategy in sports, and the Dodgers managed to do it in a heartbreaking comeback for Canadians.

John Schneider pulled an amazing turnaround from dead-last to World Series runners-up, and Canada was behind him this year. He made all the right

moves in my opinion last year, tackling all the major problems that they saw in 2024. And they had a problem with everything. They didn't solve their problems with off-season additions, as we saw with Santander's performances (ouch) and some weak pitching throughout the year.

But seven players who were already in the system stepped up to the plate and turned our year around. These players are heroes.

George Springer is now a household name, as he sent the Blue Jays to the World Series. Ernie Clement hit an MLB record for most hits in a single postseason. Alejandro Kirk was the first Mexican-born hitter to hit a home run in the World Series (and then he hit another home run). Addison Barger is the first ever pinch-hit grand slam in World Series history, and Bo Bichette hit what every Canadian hoped was the nail in the coffin in Game 7. I also have to give a special shout out to Trey Yesavage and Jeff Hoffman for pitching phenomenally to bring the Blue Jays to the World Series.

And even in our halls, NAIT reped Blue Jays colours proudly. The week of the World Series may have been the first week there were more Blue Jays attire (myself included) than the Oilers, which is shocking to say. Everyone I spoke to was excited to talk about the games, and see what the next would bring.

Even though they lost, these Blue Jays made all of Canada proud.

The home run jacket, a collection of countries that they wore with pride for their teammates, is a representation of Canada as a whole: a team of love, strength and resilience from countries all over that stood proudly in the face of a bigger, scarier opponent.

The Blue Jays are the biggest underdog story in sports, from going from last in the league to World Series contenders, and being the betting underdog for every single series.

Everyone was a fan of baseball this school year.



Students from 1984 watch as an instructor explains the material in the Auto Body Technician program.
Photos via NAIT



A student works on a car at the Patricia Campus in 1984.



Construction crews build the pedway in 2015.

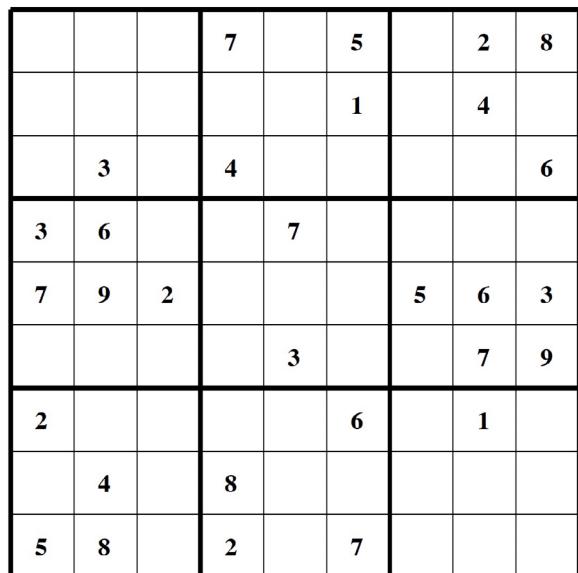


In the Dental Assisting Technology program in 1994, a student practices on a model.

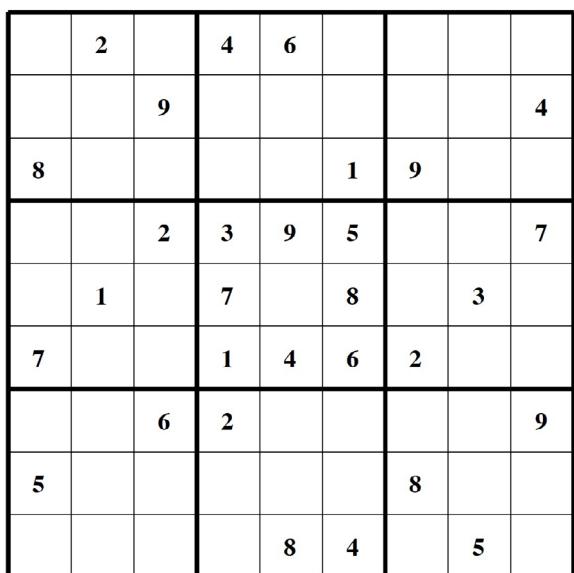


An instructor guides a student in the Heavy Equipment Technology program in 1988.

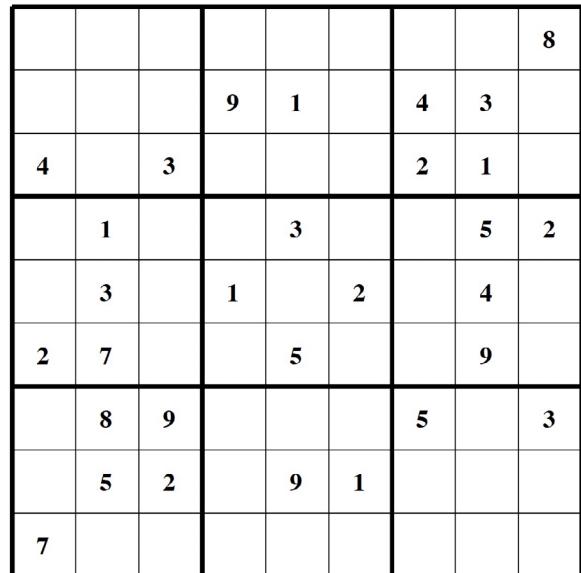
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ALBERTA NOW HAS LOWEST MINIMUM WAGE IN CANADA

By Sara Sheydwasser

On Oct. 1, five provinces across the country raised their minimum wages, making Alberta's the lowest in Canada. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario and P.E.I. now have minimum wages above \$15 per hour. Alberta's last minimum wage increase was in 2018, when the province had the highest minimum wage in the country.

BEST FALL SOUPS IN EDMONTON

By Pia Vistro

Fall is soup season, and our Digital Editor Pia has you covered. She visited five spots in the ultimate soup taste test. Watch the video to see where she went and how she ranked them. What soup will win?



MAIN CAMPUS OFFICES AND SERVICES



LOCATIONS

EDMONTON
Main Campus
11762 - 106 Street nw
Patricia Campus
12204 - 149 Street nw
South Campus
7110 Gateway Boulevard nw

BUILDINGS

- A** Industrial Building
- B** Centre for Manufacturing Solutions
- C** Gateway Mechanical Services Centre for Building Environmental Technology
- CAT** Feltham Centre
- D** Alternative Energy Centre
- E** Technical Building
- F** Medical Wing
- G** Centre for Chemical Studies
- H** Electronics Wing
- HET** Distribution Centre
- J** Centre for Electrical Technology
- L** Continuing Education and Industry Training Centre
- N** Sandvik Coromant Centre for Machinist Technology
- O** Central Building
- PIC** Productivity and Innovation Centre
- S** Activities Centre
- T** Administration Building
- U** Learning Resources Centre
- V** Industrial Technical Building
- W** Centre for Information and Communications Technology
- X** South Learning Centre
- Y** Spartan Centre for Instrumentation Technology

Last updated August 14, 2025

OFFICES AND SERVICES

Arena	S-221	NAITrium	J-104	Student Service Centre	CAT-180
Athletics	E-131	NAITSA (NAIT Students' Association)	0-108	Admissions and Enrolment Support	
Centre for Community and Belonging	E-134	Nest Eatery	S-110	Advising and Career Development Services	
Corporate & Continuing Education Welcome Centre	L-159	Nisohkamâtotan Centre	E-121	Funding and Financial Aid Services	
Ernest's	U-121	OneCard	CAT-180N	Pre-Admission Immigration Advising	
Fitness Weight Centre	S-006	Parking Services	CAT-180N	Student Awards	
Gymnasium	E-140	Protective Services	D-104		
Health Services	S-105	Reflection Rooms	CAT-406 J-209 L-024	Student Study Lounges	U-210 CAT-200
International and Intercultural Community Centre	W-101	Shop AT NAIT	X-114	Study Commons , CAT	CAT-215
Learning Services	E-105	Student Artisanal Market	O-120	Study Commons	W-203
Library Services	U-310	Student Counselling	W-111PB	NAITSA	