

NAIT NUGGET

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***NAIT didn't follow
rules in President's
\$25K washroom
reno – p. 4***

Academic misconduct concerns on the rise, says NAITSA’s Student Rights Advisor

By Amy St. Amand

After two years in the position, NAITSA’s Student Academic Rights Advisor (SARA) has seen a lot of change — including 39.9% more visits from students.

NAITSA introduced the position in 2023 after NAIT got rid of their ombudsperson role. Since then, Renata Medeiros has been advising students on their academic rights and responsibilities, with more students seeking her out each year.

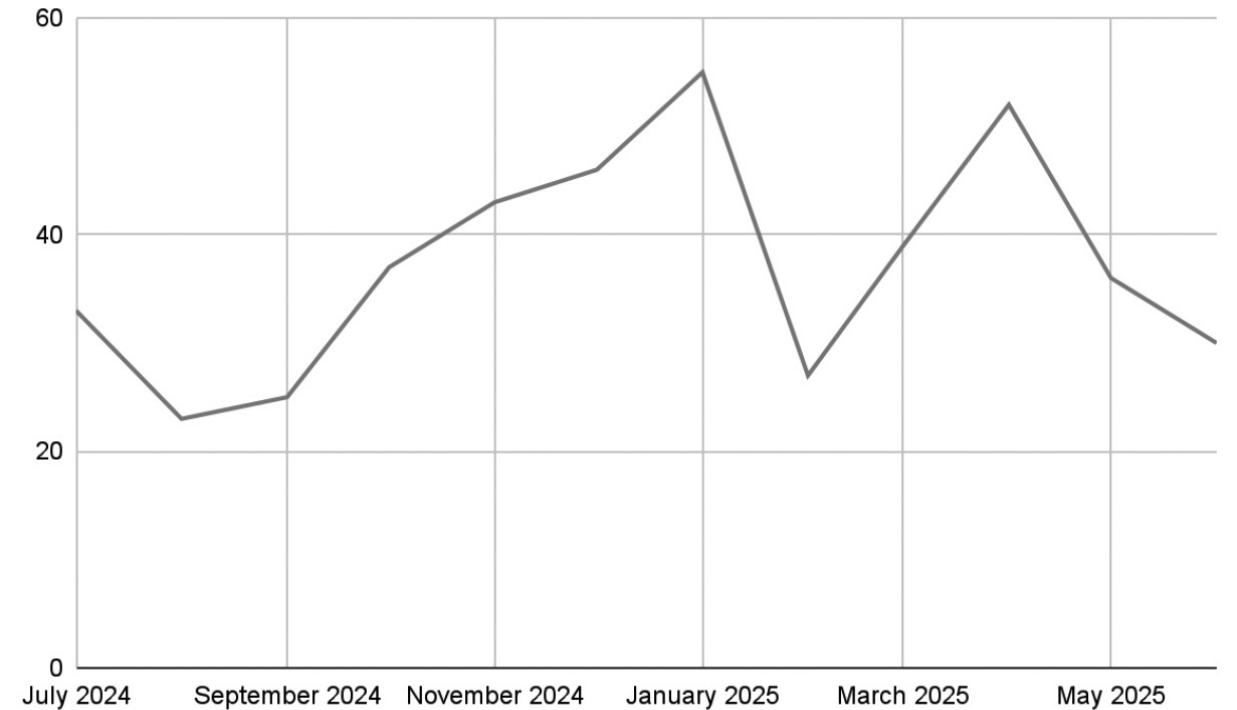
She saw 127 more interactions with students in the 2024-25 academic year, with July and December being the busiest months. In July 2024, she had a 200 per cent increase in visits, and in December 2024, 170.6 per cent.

“I feel like people know me more, and are more comfortable coming to talk to me,” she said. “There are some issues that I’ve seen increased and I hope that my work can help students understand when those issues may show up.”

Medeiros, who also previously served as NAITSA’s VP Academic, said that she’s seen academic misconduct visits increase, which she believes is partially because of a November 2024 policy change. Instead of complaints going through the Student Conduct and Accountability office (formerly known as the Student Resolution Office), complaints are now handled by the schools, and instructors and chairs would be in charge of deciding the sanctions.

“I still see that there are some staff that are not that comfortable setting the procedure as it should be,” she said. “I feel like there’s just a little bit of a lack of training there, and I am working with some NAIT departments to hopefully increase that training and make it easier for staff to apply that procedure the correct way.”

Despite the increase in visits, Medeiros doesn’t believe that academic conduct at NAIT is getting worse. While the three levels (minor, major and egregious) are defined in NAIT’s Academic Misconduct policy (SR 2.1), she believes there’s still some confusion — from both staff and students.



A chart breaks down the visits NAITSA’s Student Academic Rights Advisor had from July 2024 to May 2025 — the second year of the position. Chart supplied

“I think there is a lack of understanding of what academic misconduct is, on both sides of the staff and students,” she explained. “That’s something we are trying to address ... but I feel like there could be more resources available, especially at the beginning of the semester.”

NAIT does require all students to do academic integrity training once a term through Brightspace, but it’s the only formal training students get. “The rest is left to the instructors to maybe talk about it,” she said.

To get ahead of any potential issues, Medeiros encourages students with questions on grade reappraisals, conflicts with instructors or even just for help navigating the world of academic integrity to visit early.

“If they see that at the beginning of the year they’re not 100 per cent comfortable with their instructor, or they noticed something that the instructor may have said that did not make them feel comfortable ... that’s the first sign that maybe that’s going to be a bigger problem in the future,” she said.

“They can come talk to me to understand a little bit more of how to have that conversation with the instructor, so that they can address it right away at the beginning of the semester, and not let it escalate until the end of the semester.”

Students can book a virtual or in-person appointment online by visiting naitsa.ca/sara.



NAIT NUGGET

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NAIT Staff Association broke reimbursement clause, says Labour Board

By Amy St. Amand

The latest update in the ongoing collective bargaining between NAIT and its academic staff association (NASA) will see NASA pay NAIT back for the cost of their bargaining team during regular work hours.

In January 2025, NAIT sent NASA an invoice for the time members of NASA's bargaining team spent on collective bargaining. In total, NAIT requested payment for six bargaining dates, with a total cost of \$46,522.99. The basis for the invoice comes from Article 12 — a longstanding part of the collective agreement that essentially says two things:

- NAIT will provide workload reductions for staff doing union-related business
- NASA will reimburse NAIT for the portion of salary, benefits and vacation leave of those staff doing union-related business

NASA did not pay the invoice. According to a Feb. 27 update on their website, they believe that “when instructors do not get time off and the instructor's work was completed that NASA should not have to reimburse NAIT.”

NAIT then filed a grievance in February with the Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB). In August, the ALRB decided that by not reimbursing NAIT, NASA breached Article 12.

The Nugget obtained a copy of the decision and reviewed all 22 pages; we also spoke to NASA. NAIT provided a statement by email but could not accommodate an interview. Here's what we learned.

1. Disagreements over Article 12 go back to 2020

In the last round of bargaining in 2020, NAIT asked for reimbursement for NASA's bargaining team for sessions during business hours. NASA did not pay it, because “NAIT had never before asked for reimbursement and NASA had not budgeted for this expense.”

NAIT filed a grievance in January 2020, which was resolved in 2021 after going to mediation. The decision said that NAIT would not seek reimbursement for this round of bargaining, but in future rounds, they could rely on the “strict wording” of Article 12 unless the wording was changed. NASA tried, but it didn't go through, so Article 12 remains the same going into the current round of bargaining.

2. Cost was a factor in NASA's desire to bargain during evenings and weekdays — but not the only one

One of the challenges of this round of bargaining has been deciding when to meet. NAIT wanted to continue bargaining in the daytime as they did last round, but NASA wanted to meet exclusively on evenings and weekends.

Part of the reason was because of the size of their bargaining team, which the arbitrator called “greatly enlarged.” This year, NASA increased the size of their

bargaining team to over 20 people, and they knew there would be struggles managing that many people. But wanting to bargain during non-business hours was also about money.

During the August hearing, Trevor Zimmerman, NASA's Labour Relations Director and Bargaining Spokesperson, agreed that “avoiding the possibility of the cost of reimbursement” was one of the reasons NASA primarily wanted to bargain during evenings and weekends. Furthermore, the November 2024 decision from NAIT's first grievance also found that “there is no doubt that NASA knew that a combination of a much larger committee and the settlement of NAIT's Article 12 grievance would lead to significant costs if bargaining occurred principally during business hours as it had in past rounds.”

While cost was a factor, it wasn't the only one. Shauna MacDonald, NASA President, testified that the “primary reason ... was to avoid disruptions to students and avoid disruption to the normal work of the Instructors on the bargaining team.”

3. The ALRB found that NASA did not act in bad faith like NAIT's grievance argued

NAIT argues that because NASA did not follow the “strict wording” of Article 12 and provide reimbursement like the earlier settlement said, they acted in bad faith.

But NASA believes that because they did not request a workload reduction for any of their bargaining team members, they should not have to reimburse NAIT. MacDonald even testified that was her understanding during the hearing.

Ultimately, the arbitrator decided that NASA did not act in bad faith because they had a “a legitimate basis to disagree on the interpretation of Article 12.” While the 2020 settlement said NAIT and NASA must rely on the “strict wording,” the settlement agreement did not clarify the “strict interpretation,” said the arbitrator.

4. NASA believes they will have to pay “five figures”

The ALRB's decision document stated that for six bargaining dates, NAIT requested a total of \$46,522.99. In an interview with *the Nugget*, NASA said they were unsure how much they will have to pay, but estimated it would be “five figures.”

“There are some inaccuracies as to who was in attendance on what day, so there's just some subtleties that need to be discussed,” said MacDonald.

The ALRB's decision doesn't formally issue any remedies, but “as requested by the parties,” the arbitrator did reserve the right to step in if NAIT and NASA can't agree on what to do next.

5. The decision *shouldn't* change bargaining, but NASA members may be less patient going forward

NASA said depending on what their executive team thinks, they may reduce the size of their bargaining team if they'll now have to reimburse NAIT for daytime bargaining. They also mentioned that their members may have less tolerance for slow bargaining now that reimbursement is on the table.

“What's happening here is we're going to end up paying for work that was done,” said MacDonald. “These instructors attended their classes. They prepped their exams, they marked assessments, they answered emails. They did all of the work associated with their jobs, and we're still paying for it.”

“I think it's going to bring the frustration level of our membership up, while we're dealing with NAIT, who seems to be moving very slowly in this process.”

Jodi Edmunds, Interim Associate Vice President Human Resources, told *the Nugget* via email that NAIT's focus “is on reaching a fair and sustainable agreement for instructors, while ensuring continuity and support for students as we begin a new academic year.”

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Procurement rules bypassed in \$25K washroom renovation for NAIT President

By Josh Gwozdz

In 2023, NAIT spent \$25,300 to soundproof the private washroom of President and CEO Laura Jo Gunter and adjoining hallway, according to documents obtained by *the Nugget* through a May 2025 Freedom of Information request. The documents also showed that NAIT’s procurement procedures were not followed when completing the job.

NAIT’s executive offices and the President’s private washroom are located on the seventh floor of the T-building; the entire floor was converted to executive offices in 2019. In 2023, renovations were done to address what NAIT called “deficiencies from the original renovation.” The renovations included turning a former meeting room into a new office and improvements made to “enhance the sound barrier between the washroom and surrounding areas,” NAIT said in an email in December 2024. “This includes the washroom in the President’s office, the corridor between the washroom and meeting room, and in the meeting room.”

On Aug. 20 of this year, NAIT stated through email that sound travel between the renovated areas “posed a concern for the confidentiality of discussions, including in-camera sessions during Board meetings,” and the renovation was to “fix sound travelling in both directions between the conference room and the adjacent bathroom/office.”

NAITSA President Lilly Houcher questioned the necessity of the renovation. “It is difficult to fault NAIT’s President for correcting something that should have been done properly in the first place well before she arrived. However, it is unfortunate that this work had to be done at a time when NAIT can ill afford such expenditures,” she said via email.

The total renovation cost was approximately \$29,000, with the “washroom deficiencies costing \$25,300.” NAIT declined *the Nugget*’s request for an interview, instead providing information and a statement via email.

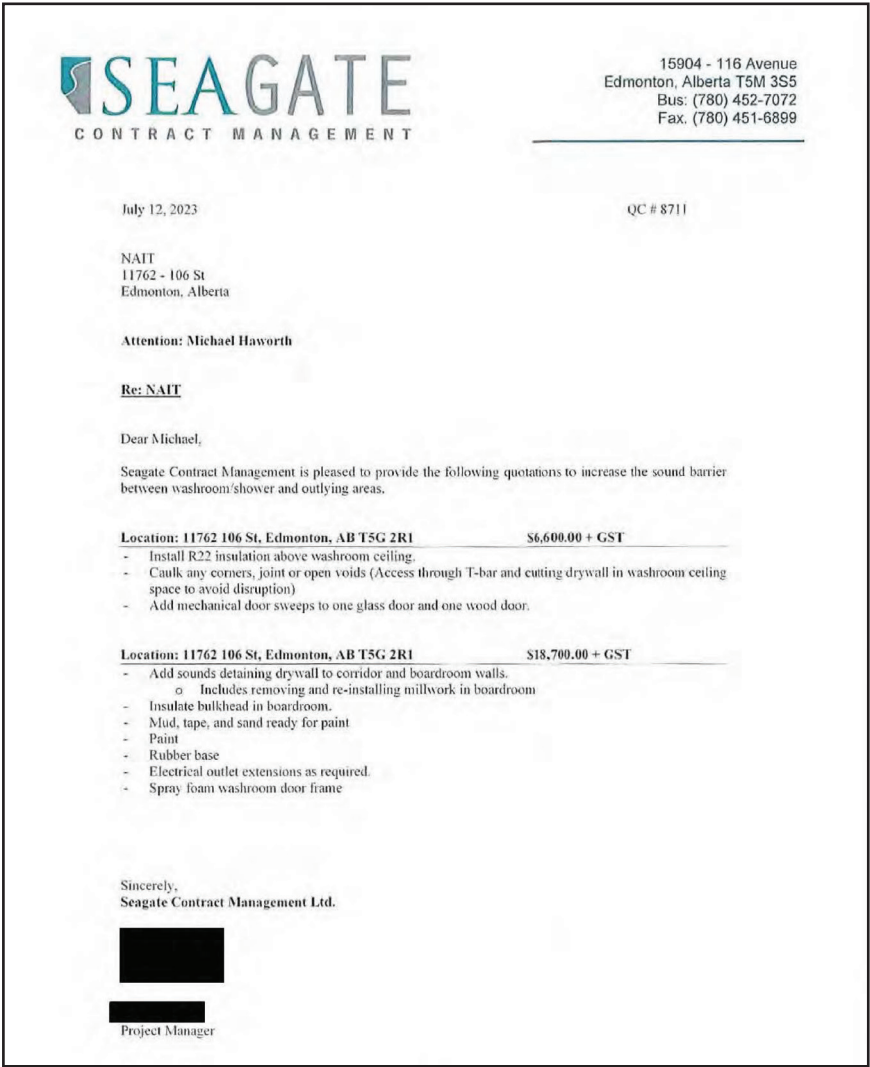
Repair and maintenance projects are “expected to be sourced and managed through the Facilities Management and Development department to ensure compliance with procurement protocols,” NAIT confirmed in an email.

Procurement process sidestepped

Instead of going through NAIT’s FMD department, records show this project was received and approved by two former NAIT staff: Michael Haworth (former Chief of Staff and Director of Strategy) and Nazim Merali (former VP Administration and Chief Financial Officer). A third former staff member, Board and Executive Coordinator Natasha Ludwig, was included in the email communications with the contractor but was not involved in the project further, according to the records provided. Haworth and Merali received the contractor’s quote at 1:23 p.m. and approved it less than four hours later, at 5:04 p.m.

According to LinkedIn profile information, Haworth and Ludwig were no longer working at NAIT as of January 2024. Merali was no longer working at NAIT as of November 2024. *The Nugget* reached out to all three for comment; Haworth and Ludwig declined to comment and Merali did not respond to our request.

For an office or space renovation, NAIT said staff complete and submit an intake form, then the project is reviewed and approved “through the annual budget process including an extensive evaluation of the project need and priority.” Procurement begins when the budget is approved; this includes “issuing competitive procurement bids or using requests for quotes to prequalified contractors.”



TOP: President and CEO, Laura Jo Gunter, speaks at a staff event. Photo via NAIT
BOTTOM: A copy of the quote received from Seagate Construction to increase “the sound barrier between washroom/shower and outlying areas” in NAIT President’s private office. *The Nugget* obtained the document through a Freedom of Information request.

For construction related projects between \$20,001 and \$75,000, NAIT works with prequalified suppliers “chosen through an open competitive process that evaluates factors such as experience, quality, and value.”

NAIT also said that for construction projects up to \$30,000, they reserve the right to “negotiate directly with a single pre-qualified contractor or issue Requests for Quotation (RFQ) to contractors on its pre-qualified list.”

New VP outlines reinforced practices

In a statement provided to the Nugget in May 2025, current VP Administration and Chief Financial Officer Mike High confirmed that “not all procurement processes were followed.” High joined NAIT in January 2025.

“While we cannot speak to the rationale behind previous decisions, we have reinforced processes to ensure that this does not happen again,” he said.

High stated these reinforced processes include “affirmed expectations around procurement and repair practices, with an emphasis on routing all work through NAIT’s Facilities Management and Development department,” “ensuring the Accounts Payable Team requires a signed contract before processing invoices related to contract work” and incorporating “additional controls that will strengthen process integrity.”

Below is a timeline of the 2023 ‘NAIT – Washroom Sound Detaining’ project:

July 12, 1:23 p.m.

Seagate Contract Management Ltd. sent Haworth and Merali a quote listing two projects; one for \$6,600 and one for \$18,700. Both projects involved improving the sound barrier between Gunter’s private washroom and surrounding areas. This was the only quote received for this project.

July 12, 1:55 p.m.

Haworth said the quote “looks to be just great” and asked what was needed to get started. He mentions there is not a lot of time for the project, saying, “Whatever you need, we will make it happen.” Merali was CC’d on the email, with Haworth mentioning to Merali that Gunter was informed of the project proceeding.

July 12, 3:09 p.m.

The Seagate employee, whose name was redacted for privacy, asked Haworth if both scopes of work were approved and said they can set up a “site kick off meeting for Monday and let Laura [Jo Gunter] know.”

July 12, 4:33 p.m.

Merali said, “Yes I believe we are going ahead with both scopes?!!”

July 12, 5:04 p.m.

Haworth agreed, saying, “Agreed. Let’s just get ‘er done.”

July 31

An invoice for “work completed to date” was billed to NAIT President’s Office. No signed contract was included in the documents received. The work included installing R22 insulation above the ceiling, caulking corners, adding door sweeps and adding sound detaining drywall to corridor and boardroom walls.

Aug. 31

Invoices for “work completed to date” and “Holdback as per Progress Claims” were billed to NAIT President’s Office.

From: Michael Haworth <MHAWORTH@nait.ca>

Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2023 1:55:03 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Nazim Merali <NAZIMMERALI@nait.ca>; [REDACTED]

Natasha Robb Ludwig <NATASHAL@nait.ca>

Subject: Re: NAIT - Washroom Sound Detaining

Hey [REDACTED]

This all looks to be just great. Our window of time will close rapidly, so how can we get started? Whatever you need, we will make it happen.

Nazim, I've let Laura Jo know we are proceeding.

Sent remotely

Michael Haworth agrees to the quote provided by Seagate Contract Management.

From: Michael Haworth

Sent: July 12, 2023 5:04 PM

To: Nazim Merali

Cc: [REDACTED] Natasha Robb Ludwig

Subject: Re: NAIT - Washroom Sound Detaining

Agreed. Let's just get 'er done.

Sent remotely

On Jul 12, 2023, at 4:33 PM, Nazim Merali <NAZIMMERALI@nait.ca> wrote:

Yes I believe we are going ahead with both scopes!!

Sent from my iPhone

Nazim Merali agrees to both scopes of work in the quote. Michael Haworth also agrees.

INVOICE

SEAGATE
CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

15904 - 116 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5M 3S5
Ph: (780) 452-7072 ~ Fax: (780) 451-6899
www.seagatecontract.com
GST #120971239

Bill To:

NAIT
President's Office
11762 - 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5G 2R1

DATE: July 31, 2023
INVOICE # R9421-07

Attention: Michael Haworth

Project Name: NAIT
Project No: 6913
Project Manager: [REDACTED]

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Invoice for work completed to date	
Install R22 insulation above washroom ceiling.B24	
Caulk any corners, joint or open voids (Access through T-bar and cutting drywall in washroom ceiling space to avoid disruption)	
Add mechanical door sweeps to one glass door and one wood door	
Quoted Amount	\$6,600.00
Add sounds detaining drywall to corridor and boardroom walls	
Insulate bulkhead in boardroom	
Mud, tape, and sand ready for paint	
Paint	
Rubber base	
Electrical outlet extensions as required	
Spray foam washroom door frame	
Quoted Amount	\$18,700.00
Progress Claim #1 for 60% Completed	\$15,180.00
Less 10% Holdback	-\$1,518.00
SUBTOTAL	\$ 13,662.00
GST (5%)	\$ 683.10
TOTAL	14,345.10
PAYMENT TERMS	NET 30

Make all checks payable to Seagate Contract Management Ltd.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR BUSINESS!

Invoiced Sent to: NATASHAL@nait.ca

A copy of the first invoice for the work done. It was billed to the NAIT President’s office.

A comprehensive timeline of NAIT, staff association bargaining

By Amy St. Amand

If you haven't been following the collective bargaining between NAIT and their academic staff association (NASA), you should. Not only is it super important to students (hello potential strike!), it has been a wild ride to witness from the backseat. NAIT and NASA have been bargaining for over a year, trading proposals, disagreements on when to meet and even *multiple* legal complaints.

We broke down the major events in the past 20 months and summarized them in a handy timeline for you.

	<div>JANUARY 2024</div> <div>NAIT and NASA meet to discuss bargaining. NASA says that due to their large bargaining committee, they want to meet during evenings and weekends. According to NASA's update, NAIT raised concerns about how bargaining outside of business hours could prolong negotiations.</div>
NAIT's first complaint filed	<div>APRIL 2024</div> <div>NAIT files a complaint with the Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB) against NASA, alleging a breach of sections 6o(1)(b) and 6o(3) of the <i>Alberta Labour Relations Code</i>. NAIT's complaint says NASA is "placing unreasonable conditions on collective bargaining, by only agreeing to bargain during the weekdays in the daytime from May to August and only if the Union agrees that all other bargaining take place on weekday evenings and weekends and it includes all twenty-three of its bargaining committee members present."</div>
	<div>JUNE 2024</div> <div>NAIT and NASA attend a resolution conference facilitated by the ALRB. They could not reach a resolution, so the complaint will proceed to a formal hearing.</div>
first bargaining meeting	<div>JULY 10 2024</div> <div>The first bargaining meeting takes place, with mostly "opening remarks," says NASA, which "set the stage for negotiations, talk about their priorities, and help the other side anticipate what will be discussed." NAIT did not table their wage proposals at this meeting.</div>
NASA's first complaint filed	<div>AUGUST 2024</div> <div>NASA is asking for a retroactive wage increase of 25% from July 1, 2024, along with a 10% plus cost of living adjustment on July 1, 2025. On Aug. 20, NASA files an unfair labour practice complaint against NAIT with the ALRB. Some of NASA's allegations include that NAIT says observers must use vacation time to attend bargaining meetings and that NAIT is no longer able to accommodate bargaining on campus. As NAIT's April complaint and this complaint are connected, the two parties will have a formal hearing in October.</div>
	<div>SEPTEMBER 25 2024</div> <div>Bargaining session takes place. NASA has tabled all of their proposals. NAIT has not tabled their monetary proposals.</div>
	<div>OCTOBER 8-9 2024</div> <div>NAIT and NASA have a hearing at Alberta Labour Relations Board, primarily regarding time of bargaining (from their April and August complaints).</div>
decision is released	<div>NOVEMBER 27 2024</div> <div>ALRB's final decision is released; they order that NAIT and NASA "shall meet to bargain in good faith and make every reasonable effort to reach a collective agreement." They must have at least 30 hours of bargaining by Dec. 15, 2024 — including "at least 15 hours during normal business hours." NAIT's April complaint is upheld; NASA's August complaint is dismissed.</div>

continues on top of next page



	<div>DECEMBER 2024</div> <div>NAIT asks ALRB for clarity on the decision; they want to know if NAIT and NASA should continue to split their bargaining sessions, or if that was just until Dec. 30. Bargaining dates are set for January and February 2025.</div>
	<div>JANUARY 2025</div> <div>NAIT sends NASA an invoice “for costs associated with NASA members attending two daytime bargaining sessions in December 2024, even though there was no time off request from NASA for those days” (from NASA’s website). Article 12 from the collective agreement says NASA must reimburse NAIT when NASA’s bargaining committee members participate in bargaining during regular work hours.</div>
NAIT’s second complaint filed	<div>FEBRUARY 2025</div> <div>NAIT files a grievance against NASA for not paying the invoice from January. According to NASA, NAIT says they believe the lack of payment “erodes [their] labour relations relationship.” NAIT asked for a total of over \$45,000 for six bargaining sessions.</div>
	<div>MARCH 10 2025</div> <div>NASA and NAIT meet with ALRB to discuss timing of bargaining. ALRB directs both parties “to be reasonable when setting dates and times to bargain, with no strict ratio of daytime and evening bargaining.” NAIT files for mediation; NASA agrees. Bargaining dates are set for March to June.</div>
NAIT tables wage proposal	<div>APRIL 4 2025</div> <div>NAIT tables their wage proposal, suggesting 10% over four years: 3% at ratification, 3% in July 2025 and 2% each in July 2026 and 2027.</div>
mediation begins	<div>APRIL 28-30 2025</div> <div>NAIT and NASA meet with Mediator Greg Francis, who tells both parties to focus on instructor workload. Near the end of the last session, NASA requests to start negotiating the Essential Services Agreement — which says what duties are required should there be a strike — and move to formal mediation. But the parties eventually agree to continue with informal mediation and negotiate the ESA at the same time.</div>
	<div>MAY 21 2025</div> <div>NASA and NAIT meet to negotiate the Essential Services Agreement. NASA says “generally speaking, the talks went well.” Another ESA meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2025.</div>
	<div>JUNE 1 2025</div> <div>NASA holds third round of picket captain training. At this point, they still need to progress through formal mediation and hold a strike vote before they would be allowed to strike. If a strike vote were to pass, that still does not mean a strike would happen.</div>
	<div>JUNE 10 2025</div> <div>NAIT and NASA meet again to negotiate the ESA. Bargaining is on pause until the end of September.</div>
decision is released	<div>AUGUST 5 2025</div> <div>The ALRB releases their decision that NASA must reimburse NAIT for bargaining. The decision also states that NASA was not acting in bad faith based on their interpretation of Article 12. Read more about the decision on page 2.</div>
mediation resumes	<div>SEPTEMBER 22 2025</div> <div>Mediation session is scheduled — the first since April. They will meet Sept. 22, 23, 24 and 29. At this point NAIT and NASA have met 15 times, according to the ALRB’s decision document: eight weekday daytime sessions and seven evening sessions.</div>

A high school graduate's dilemma: work first, or go to post-secondary?

Editorial by Rafael Luis Flores

Every year, high school graduates face two choices that determine how they will spend the next few years. Some graduates go straight to some form of post-secondary study. Others prefer to undergo one or more “gap years” after they graduate, which are usually spent working.

While there are no available annual statistics showing the percentage of high school graduates who enroll in post-secondary studies immediately (that I could find), Statistics Canada found that in 2021-22, 46 per cent of 18-24 year olds went to college or university, while around 38 per cent worked.

But what path is better, and why do people choose either one? That is the question I want to answer.

The conventional path

For many high schoolers, there is a traditional expectation to immediately take the next academic step after graduating. For some, this manifests as cultural pressure. Bachelor of Business Administration student Daniela Ret said most of her friends took a gap year.

“But for me, I feel like it was affected culturally, like I’m Filipino,” said Ret. “So my parents wanted me to go straight into post-secondary. They were giving me advice of if I had stopped, maybe I wouldn’t have the momentum of continuing to study.”

Ret also received advice from her family about what program to take. “My parents chose my major,” said Ret, but her older siblings helped her choose a focus. “We’re 11 years apart, so they’re already working. They advised me to take marketing because of my personality and just like, how I am. And I ended up loving it.”

In Canada, the end of high school usually coincides with graduates turning 18. This means that as new adults, high school graduates might lean towards decisions that grant independence. Nevertheless, there are still those who take the conventional path to find the independence they’re seeking.

Dalyce Sheaves, a Media Communications and Production student, is from a small town with a population of around 500 people. She said she “didn’t feel connected” to her hometown as a teenager.

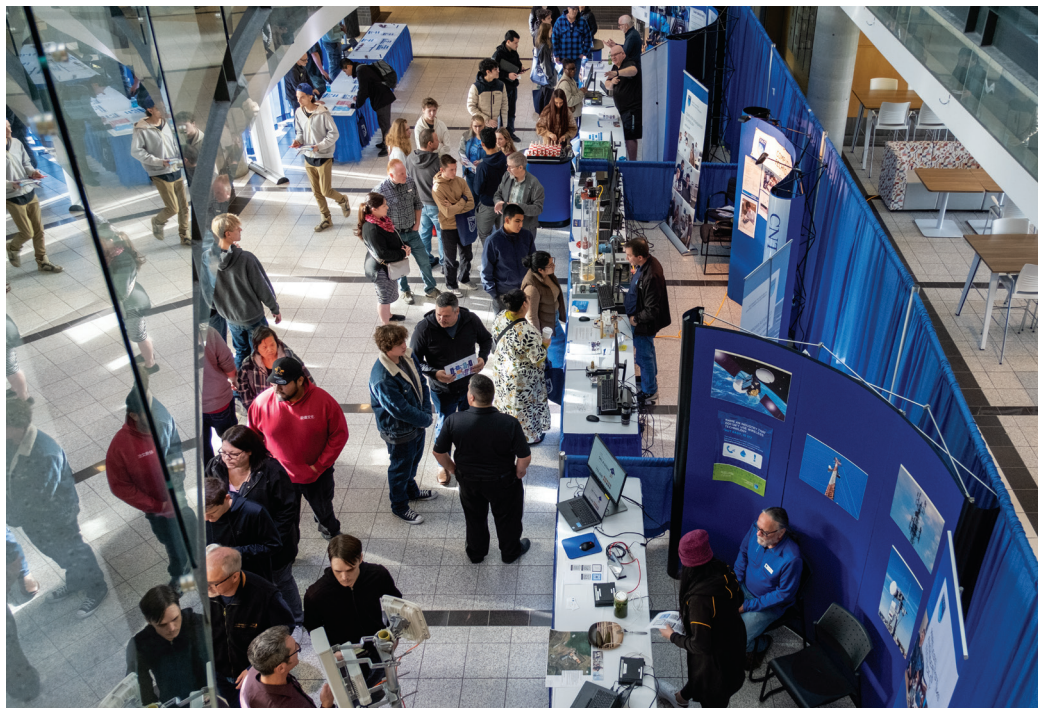
“I was like, I need to get out, experience different community,” said Sheaves. “I want to experience the world in a different light with no one else that I knew. I was coming up here by myself, I didn’t have any friends coming to the city. I was doing it on my own, and that was something I really wanted to.”

Sheaves said limited employment opportunities in her hometown also impacted her decision to forgo a gap year. “I couldn’t have done that. I would have had to drive at least 30 minutes or more to try and get a job that could even help me or keep me busy for a year while I was out of school,” said Sheaves. The cost of living in a car-reliant small town would not make a gap year financially worth it, she explained.

Both Ret and Sheaves said they don’t regret going straight into post-secondary. Ret believes her program enables her to establish her professional network at a young age, while Sheaves feels fortunate to be in a “hands-on” and supportive program she is truly interested in. She also noted that while there is still financial strain involved in post-secondary, she treats it as an opportunity to practice financial independence.

The “work first” path

Some graduates view independence differently. While those who take a gap year may do so to earn money to pay for future studies, some want a break after 12 straight years of mandatory education. Spending time outside of academia also enables some people to better assess what profession or trade is the best fit for them.



Prospective students visit NAIT during the 2024 open house.

Photo by Roiel Carlos

Leon Forman, a third year Game Design student, took two gap years prior to enrolling at NAIT. “I graduated in this era of when ... everything was shut down, everything was moved online, and I still want that in-person experience at post-secondary,” said Forman. “So I just kind of tried to work as much as I could during those gap years,” he explained. In addition to working, he did some academic upgrading, hoping to get into the same universities as his social circle. “I spent time trying to get those same marks and stuff to be able to go to the same schools before I was just like, oh, well I should just do something I want to do.”

Forman views working during gap years as advantageous because he believes it offers opportunities to interact with people who have fuller work experiences. But the number one advantage of a gap year, said Forman, is having an academic break. “You’ll be able to earn income of your own and be able to actually live as your own person,” said Forman. “You also get to look into what other people are doing. You have this certain freedom where you’re not locking yourself into an education path for something you may not like.” This makes for better career introspection, self-fulfillment and flexibility, he explained.

The verdict

In my opinion, going straight to post-secondary is the more sensible option for the following reasons:

First, the same kind of work opportunities open to those in a gap year are also open to post-secondary students. Canadian post-secondary course loads are generally very conducive for students to be employed part-time.

Second, there are more specialized (and sometimes higher paying) work opportunities (e.g. internships) that are open only to post-secondary students of specific programs. This enables students to develop highly specialized skills while earning at the same time.

Third, being exposed to a broader set of people and experiences does not appear to be an advantage exclusive to those taking gap years. In NAIT itself, the environment is very diverse in terms of culture, age and work experience. There is also a strong drive to provide industry networking opportunities for students.

However, both paths have unique advantages and any decision should depend on the personal circumstances of the individual high school graduate.

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NAITSA

SENATE ELECTION

2025/2026

NOMINATIONS OPEN AUGUST 27 – SEPTEMBER 24

DISCUSS AND MAKE DECISIONS ON BIG PICTURE ISSUES
THAT CONCERN NAIT STUDENTS

- 12 student Senators will be elected
- 10 meetings throughout the year and sub-committee meetings that include dinner
- Honorarium up to \$744
- Leadership Experience & Professional Development
- Your position will be recognized on your Student Involvement Record
- Most meetings will be on Wednesday evenings

Interested in becoming a senate member?
Nominations close at 4pm, September 24.

Online voting using your NAIT Student Portal
October 10-15 at 4pm

For more information and to download an election Nomination Package, visit
naitsa.ca/elections



VOTING INFORMATION BOOTHS

Main Campus
NAITSA Office O108

Main Campus
near Fresh Express

Main Campus X-wing
near the bookstore

Patricia Campus (if req'd)

South Lobby

HP Centre 1st floor
near Bytes

CAT 1st floor
near the Crossing

CAT 2nd floor
near the student lounge

Souch Campus (if req'd)

VOTER PRIVACY & ELECTION VOTING INTERFERENCE

Did you know that NAITSA's Bylaw 7.17 protects a voters' right to cast their vote privately during all elections and referendum? While campaigning all candidates need to leave the immediate area of a student at large who opens a device to log-in and vote in this election.

If you feel your right to vote in private has been violated, please email the Chief Returning Officer at cro@naitsa.ca or contact the Deputy Returning Officer in the NAITSA office, room O108.

naitsa

Ooks running all year with new indoor track team

By Geono Aloisio

3 years after reviving the cross-country program, the Ooks are now joining indoor track.

After running in open spots last season, the Ooks announced in May that their application to officially become the 11th indoor track team was accepted by the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC).

The addition of the sport means NAIT is now competing in all ACAC offered sports — making them only the second school in the conference to do so.

According to NAIT Director of Athletics and Recreation Jordan Richey, this was part of a big picture goal to enrich student experience and opportunities. “We made that decision to say, let’s get in every ACAC sport,” said Richey. The move to join indoor track was “always part of the plan” for the cross-country program.

“The natural progression was to eventually see how cross-country running went, and then if it went well ... we would then maybe transition to providing those same student athletes opportunities in the winter semester,” he explained in an interview with *the Nugget*. “When we made the decision four years ago to go into cross-country running, we knew this was phase two.”

The cross-country team competed in all five ACAC Grand Prix events provided in Fall 2023 and 2024 before the announcement. Now, with indoor track, the Ooks will compete in an additional four events from January to March.

“It’s going to help with recruiting a lot of student athletes,” said Richey. “There

are different events as well too, so they will have to recruit different athletes. There’s a 60-metre sprint, which obviously that attracts a different student. So it’s not just taking your existing cross-country team and putting them in there.”

The Ooks have made significant strides since joining the cross-country competition. In 2023, their first season competing, NAIT sent two runners to nationals. The following season, both the men’s and women’s teams captured bronze at the 2024 ACAC Championships and sent nine runners to nationals.

“We weren’t expecting the success we had as early in cross-country ... we thought this was going to take time, like it does for most new sports,” said Richey. “We made nationals in both the first two years, and so we definitely weren’t expecting that success early on.”

Now that the program operates throughout the school year, Richey believes the runners’ accomplishments in the fall might carry through into the winter months. It will also help the cross-country athletes earn scholarships and gain more experience throughout the year.

“With the success that our cross-country running team has had in its first three years, we are hoping that it could translate into indoor track, but we’ll have to wait and see.” The Ooks’ cross-country season began on Sept. 6 and will transition to indoor track for their inaugural event on Jan. 24.

NAIT Athletics refresh hallway, gym ahead of 2026 nationals

By Geono Aloisio

The E and J hallway has a fresh new look.

The Ooks updated the hallways surrounding the Athletics and Recreation office late last month to include more branding and school colours as a part of their ongoing series of renovations.

Some of the additions include new TVs for displaying team rosters, a revamp of the gymnasium concessions and the entrance to the gym.

NAIT Director of Athletics and Recreation, Jordan Richey, said the decision to modernize the area was part of the department’s effort to “refresh” the Ooks’ gameday environment before NAIT hosts the men’s volleyball national championships in March.

“It’s been about a year in the making,” Richey said in an interview with *the Nugget*. “We knew we wanted to do a little bit of a facelift for our area, the gym, the whole thing, since we will be hosting people from around the country ... so we fundraised all these dollars to get it all done.”

“Gone are the days where we’re going to print photos, put them up on the wall. You’re just going to see the teams, the pictures and faces all rotating through there [on TVs], transitioning down into the E hallway by the gymnasium.”

The changes to the hallway aren’t the only areas that saw improvements over the summer. In 2023, *the Nugget* wrote a story about NAIT’s “faded and forgotten” Athletics Wall of Fame — it hadn’t been touched in years. Now, the lone row of plaques on the wall outside the gymnasium will be digitized and updated. It’s already been refreshed with a wall wrap, and Richey said a TV is supposed to be “going in any day.”

“There’s numerous reasons why that hasn’t been updated, but we just knew we needed to get it going here,” Richey said. “We didn’t want to do it with the old plaques on the wall, the outdated pictures on there.”

“We’ll be putting our seven nominees on there, and then we have a plan now



One of the new murals outside the Athletics office.

Photo by Amy St. Amand

to introduce five new nominees a year for five years.”

NAIT’s gymnasium also received a new floor with new logos, new LED scoreboards, new crashpads and more Ooks branding as part of phases one and two of the renovations. Richey says the gymnasium will be closed in December during phase three for more upgrades, such as repainting and adding decals to the walls.

“That’s going to be a big one,” Richey explained. “All the walls are going to be done, so all the banners have to come down. It’s going to be a big ordeal.”

“So when the students return January 5 ... the gym will look completely different again.”

The first home game at the gym for the Ooks is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 3, with the men’s basketball team taking on the Keyano College Huskies.

Ooks soccer teams relocate to Sherwood Park; timeline to return to campus unclear

The Ooks soccer teams are on the move — again. NAIT is packing its bags and heading to Sherwood Park after calling the St. Albert Soccer Association's Riel Fields home for three seasons.

By Geono Aloisio

The move comes after the St. Albert Soccer Association informed the Ooks they no longer have capacity for NAIT to play home games at their field in the fall.

"We didn't really have a choice," NAIT Director of Athletics and Recreation, Jordan Richey, said in an interview with *the Nugget*. "We were told that, unfortunately, because of the growth in their grassroots programs, they [St. Albert Soccer Association] would not be able to accommodate us this year."

Field changes are nothing new for the Ooks soccer program. According to a 2019 article by *the Nugget*, the teams relocated to the Strathcona Athletic Park "due to safety concerns surrounding the deteriorating NAIT field." In 2021, NAIT's on-campus field was demolished to make way for the LRT station, sending the Ooks to the Edmonton Scottish Society's facilities for one year before they settled in St. Albert.

Richey said the St. Albert Soccer Association informed the Ooks that the decision was based solely on limited availability, adding that the association "loved having" NAIT during their tenure at the fields.

The Ooks began searching for a place to host their men's and women's soccer home games for the 2025 season, and eventually landed on Sherwood Park's Strathcona Athletic Park.

"We didn't really have a choice. We were told that, unfortunately, because of the growth in their grassroots programs, they would not be able to accommodate us this year."

However, Richey said it was "very difficult to find soccer fields in the Edmonton and surrounding area," and that the Ooks are not the only ones struggling to find a home.

The men's and women's teams ended up training in different locations before the 2025-26 season due to difficulty securing a facility. The women's team began their training in Sherwood Park and the men trained out of Victoria Soccer Club after hosting tryouts in various locations.

"All of our games are going to be taking place at Strathcona Athletic Park in Sherwood Park," Richey explained. "It's the same field that Concordia plays their home games at, as they don't have a field as well."

"It's a bit of a problem for post-secondary institutions in the Edmonton Area."

While finding a field for the upcoming season was a challenge for the Ooks, NAIT men's soccer player Jameson Kiezik is "excited" about the change.



The NAIT soccer teams have spent the last three years playing in St. Albert, but will move to Sherwood Park because of space constraints. Photo via NAIT Ooks

"I honestly don't mind moving fields," Kiezik said in an Instagram message. "There are some memories, I'm going to miss training and playing in St. Albert. Hopefully, the new place will be a good time."

NAIT women's soccer player Jyla Micael Erandio echoed Kiezik's statement. Switching to a new field wasn't a "major change" for her, but she noted that "some fields are patching."

"That can sometimes throw my game off," Micael Erandio said in an Instagram message. "One thing I am really excited about moving to our new fields is that it's closer to NAIT, so we'll likely see more faces at our home games, which would be amazing."

It is unclear how long the Ooks will play home games in Sherwood Park or whether a return to St. Albert is possible.

Richey added that the soccer teams moving to another temporary field has "elevated the concern" of not having a field at NAIT for the Ooks.

However, with no confirmed news about an on-campus soccer field, the Ooks may be left waiting for a while before they have a permanent spot to roost.



Horoscope



By Kelsey Kliparchuk

Aries (March 21-April 19)

This month, solitude is bliss. Reflect on how your resources are being used to add to your physical well-being. Do your values and actions truly support your overall health? Your body is not just a temple, but your home.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Two words: soft + power. Your love for the finer things in life comes from being ruled by the planet Venus. Focus on ALL of the relationships that pour into your non-toxic tumbler, especially the one with yourself.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It's time for your cleverness to be seen! Your ability to self-approve through the daily grind (like, why do we already have a quiz in the first week?!) will help you silence the inner chatter.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your voice matters! A journal entry of your first week of classes, a vivid dream or a good conversation with a new friend may be the communication shift you need. Trust your inner rhythm and remember to be the sound that grounds.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

Money talks and you're ready to listen. Indulge with care and intention this month — maybe that looks like buying the used espresso machine instead of a Starbucks drink everyday. Because you're worth it, Leo.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Bringing order to the chaos of a new semester is your M.O., Virgo. If you've been feeling overextended, September is your month to fine tune your routine. Change is good. Trust that every ending is a new beginning.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Seasons change and so do you. Staying punctual will help you feel at ease and give you the energy boost needed to deal with bigger things of the heart and mind. Make a gratitude list.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You are once again being reminded of the power of letting that sh*t go. Now, maybe you can make some art out of it. Find comfort in your community and by being your authentic self, not the person you thought you were.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Home is where you make it, so at least make it cozy and somewhere you want to be. Long-term stability will be better than short-term gratification this month, Sagittarius. Your future deserves clarity.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Can you reach for the stars without overextending yourself? Sounds impossible, right? Not for the goat. You've been in go-mode and it's time to expand your mental capacity to be still and let your honest values stand the test of time.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, you are more than your student loan or the parking ticket you got at CAT parkade (but you should definitely check out our August issue Parking Guide). This month offers a chance to restructure your resources and find abundance in all areas of your life. Trust the upheaval.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

With the solar eclipse and full moon in your sign, it finally is all about you, sweet Pisces (for once). Don't forget to stay hydrated through those long lectures and trust the waves. You are ready for this next chapter in your life.



Housing for Students

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EDMONTON STUDENT ALLIANCE





Art by Chinny Feb Taleon, Graphics Editor @ch1n_o2

Sustainability spotlight

Uplift Adventures



TOP: Davis leads an tour sharing stories of the night sky.
BOTTOM: Davis does reasearch in Waterton, Alta. Photo by Shane Turgeon
Photo supplied

Sustainability Spotlight is a collaboration between the Nugget and NAITSA’s Sustainability Committee. Each month, the committee interviews a sustainability expert to learn more about their journey. This month features Heather Davis, NAIT alumna and founder of Uplift Adventures. Answers have been edited for clarity and space.

NAITSA Sustainability Committee: What inspired you to start a sustainability-based business?

Heather Davis: It really came back to, you know, I grew up on a farm. My parents were small business owners, being farmers, and they worked on the land and you really build a connection when you are out there on the land all the time and you can see those impacts that happen.

NSC: Your tagline is “explore with purpose.” Tell me more about what that means to you and your business.

HD: Explore with purpose, for me, was because of where I’m planning on taking the company. But every time that we go outdoors, we’re exploring with purpose. Whether that is going out there to connect with the land, or we’re going out there for the land to help us, because it’s two ways, right? We take care of the land, the land takes care of us, so we’re always exploring with purpose and we’re never going out there with the intent to harm the places that we travel to.

NSC: How are your tourism services different from the traditional ones in terms of environmental impact?

HD: So I’m one of the only guides in the Canadian Rockies who is certified for all national parks. And that really teaches a lot of the history, the geology, the flora, fauna, the human history of the area. When you can bring to light the places that we travel to and help people find that connection with the places that they travel to, then they have a lot more respect for it as well.

I used to work in government and I ran a disaster relief program after the 2013 floods that hit the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. There’s a lot of people who think it’s their right to be on the land, and it is kind of our human nature to be on the land. But I don’t think of it so much as a right but a privilege to be in these places. Our job as humans isn’t to take whatever we can from the land, it’s to make sure that we protect it so that we can have it for now and for the future.

Helping people connect to the places that they travel to, it helps them then want to take care of those places.

NSC: What’s the biggest challenge that you face as a sustainability-focused business?

HD: I think the hardest part is being up against the quick money, because sustainability takes time. If you look at it long term, it economically does better, but quite often we want instant gratification. So when we see something like a large-scale open pit mine, and we see huge money with that, that’s what sometimes people jump to.

NSC: Your website says that your ultimate goal with Uplift Adventures is to create conservation tourism. What does that look like?

HD: That’s where the tagline “explore with purpose” actually comes from. I want to build one or two week long trips where people get to explore through the Canadian Rockies, get to adventure, get to fall in love with all these things that I love, but there’s a portion of their trip where they get to work on a sustainable project.

Sometimes that means sustainable development, like building a bridge because the creek is being crossed, and when you damage the riparian area, you’re damaging the creek.

NSC: What small change would you encourage individuals or businesses to make?

HD: There’s a lot of really cool tools out there right now. I really like that people are thinking more sustainably. One of my big things is that I don’t buy a lot of stuff, but obviously I still buy things, I still need things, and there’s no way that I’m going to be able to live a life without using stuff. It’s just impossible.

We all have an impact, but how do you lower that impact? I would really love to see products being built really well and we can make those choices based on how we spend our money.

We’re getting to a place in our world where we’re starting to recycle more and upcycle things, but it’s not entirely there. So, a lot of times that means more mining. And that’s hard for people to hear too, because then there’s a lot of people who are employed by mining. So, it’s a very complex system. But I really do think if we really purchase things with the intent of longevity, then that’s going to reduce our impacts long term.

To learn more about Davis, Uplift Adventures and her goal to create conservation tourism, visit the website at upliftadventures.ca or follow @uplift_adventures on Instagram.

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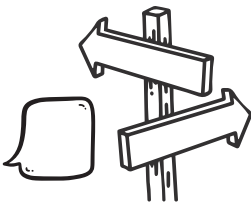
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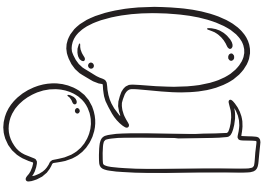
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CLUBS CORNER



the best part of starting a club is...



Providing a feeling of home for students who live far away from home
-Sakshi

Creating a space/ community you care about and see people grow and connect from it
-Harshpreet

Getting to bring new opportunities to our program!
-Veterinary Technologist Students' Association

Finding your people!
-Steve

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