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Domestic tuition increasing in 2026/27

By Will Dawson, *Media Intern*
 Amy St. Amand, *Editor-in-Chief*

NAIT has increased domestic tuition for 11 programs and 29 apprenticeship programs. The 2026/27 domestic tuition increase was approved by NAIT’s Board of Governors on March 3. NAIT’s VP Academic Peter Leclaire said the increases will “maintain the standard of education students and industry partners expect.”

“Revenue from these increases will help offset rising delivery costs, allowing NAIT to sustain the quality of instruction, technology, labs and hands-on training that are essential to student success,” said Leclaire in an emailed statement to *the Nugget*.

NAIT was not available for an interview.

10 programs with 10% increase, 94 with none

The total increase is in line with Alberta’s tuition framework, which sets the cap for an average 2 per cent increase with a maximum individual increase of 10 per cent.

94 programs saw no change in tuition rates, while 10 programs received up to a 10 per cent increase. Bachelor of Business Administration’s tuition also received a two per cent per-credit increase.

29 apprenticeship programs increased 7.2 per cent, said an email to students sent on March 4. The increase reflects “historically low rates relative to delivery costs,” the email said. The 2026/27 rates for apprentices and affected programs were not listed on NAIT’s website at the same time as the domestic changes, but were updated later. NAIT’s media relations strategist explained to *the Nugget* that domestic tuition and apprenticeship tuition rates are approved at the same time, but “there is additional processing time required to upload all apprenticeship rates into [the] system.”

Tuition increases costly and confusing, said one student

Rachel Taylor, a first-year Petroleum Engineering Technology student, was shocked when she first heard her program’s tuition was going up for 2026/27.

But her surprise came from the amount being less than she expected.

In the fall, Taylor attended a meeting about a potential Exceptional Tuition Increase (ETI) — tuition raises that go above the normal allowed caps to “improve the quality in a way that justifies the increase,” according to Alberta’s Tuition Framework. Her program had a proposed 45 per cent increase. During the meeting, Taylor said she heard about more labs and field trips, though she said the main cost was for higher instructor wages.

While Petroleum Engineering Technology didn’t make the final cut of nine programs submitted to the government for approval, the tuition will still increase 10 per cent for 2026/27.

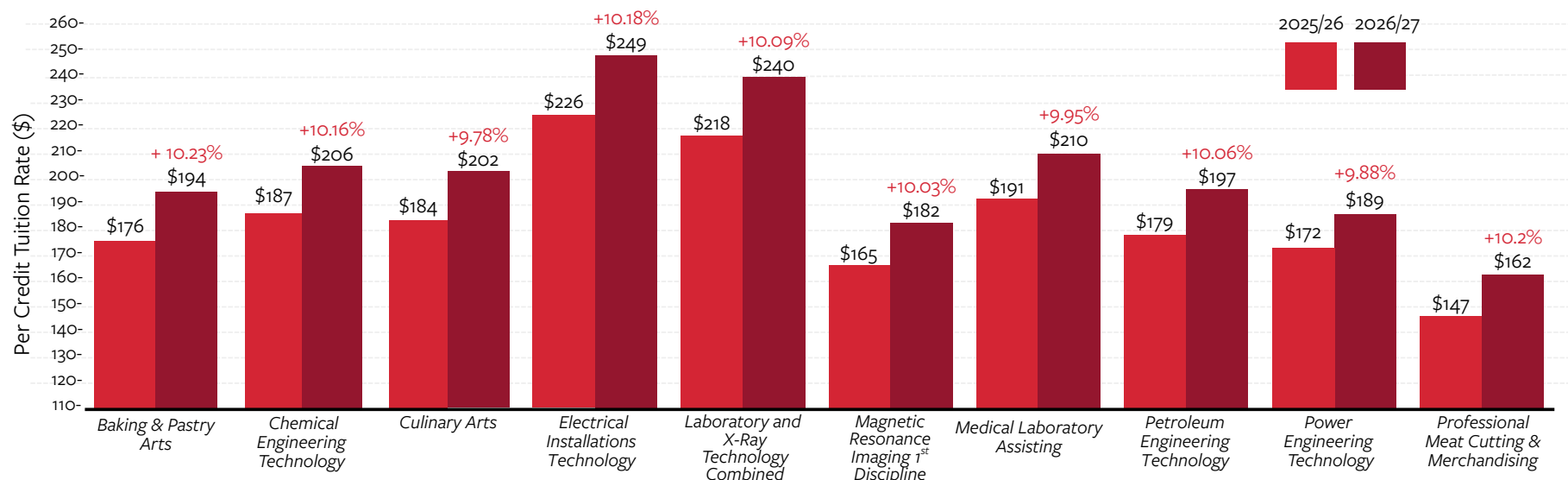
“It’s definitely a big financial strain on students as it is, especially with today’s economy.”

But the difference wasn’t communicated to Taylor or other students who had been consulted. “I didn’t actually understand that part,” she said. “I was surprised it’s not as much as we were told, which is actually a huge relief because I totally thought it was going to be 45 per cent,” she said. ETIs would have only applied to new students — current students would stay at the 2025/26 rate.

When Taylor first learned the increase would only be 10 per cent, she said she assumed that NAIT had listened to their feedback from the consultation meetings and lowered the proposed increase. But without the 45 per cent ETI, she’s now wondering about the new labs, field trips and instructor wages she was told about.

A document shared with students in November splits the proposed ETI quality improvement expenses in three ways: 60 per cent towards curriculum improvements, 20 per cent towards program/student resources and 20 per cent to faculty/staff.

PROGRAMS WITH 10% DOMESTIC TUITION INCREASE IN 2026/27



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In a March 4 email sent to students about domestic tuition increases, NAIT states that “tuition will increase to better reflect the actual cost of delivering high-quality, hands-on education.”

“I guess it just feels like, ‘Oh, so what’s my money going towards now?’” Taylor questioned.

“It would be nice to know, especially after being displayed all those numbers in that meeting, and then now it’s only going up 10 per cent. What are they putting it towards?”

And even though Taylor won’t have to pay 45 per cent more like she thought she might, she’s still concerned about the \$18 cost per credit increase for her program.

“I do really love all my instructors, and I think they do such an excellent job.

I’m very understanding of that aspect of it. But yeah, it’s definitely a big financial strain on students as it is, especially with today’s economy.”

If approved, the programs that would see an exceptional tuition increase are:

- Electrical Engineering Technology Diploma
- Instrumentation Engineering Technology Diploma (includes co-op)
- Dental Technology Diploma (includes co-op)
- Denturist Technology Diploma
- Veterinary Technology Diploma (includes co-op)
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography Cardiac Diploma
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography General Diploma
- Medical Laboratory Technology Diploma
- Medical Radiologic Technology Diploma

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Non-instructional fees increase 40 per cent, no new fees added

By Amy St. Amand, Editor-in-Chief

Starting in 2026/27, students will see big changes in their mandatory non-instructional fees (MNIFs). One fee has been eliminated, and the total cost is going up 40 per cent. MNIFs cover services above tuition, like NAIT’s makerspace, loanable technology and recreation and fitness classes. Students are unable to opt-out.

NAIT has eliminated the OneCard Support fee, leaving just the Recreation and Athletic fee and the Student Technology fee. Both fees increased.

The Recreation and Athletic fee, which covers things like recreation facilities, intramurals and active study spaces, increased 27 per cent. In the fall and winter semester, students will pay \$170, up from \$132.88 in 2025/26. Apprentices will pay \$11.34 per week, up from \$8.86 in 2025/26.

The Student Technology fee, introduced in 2024, helps to “enhance several technical services that are outside of the classroom and lab spaces such as

improving wi-fi in non-classroom settings and makerspaces and improving the amount of loanable technology available to students,” said a statement from NAIT when the fee was first introduced.

The fee increase 91 per cent. In fall and winter, students will pay \$90, up from \$47 last year. Apprentices will pay \$5.99 per week instead of \$3.13. In spring and summer, students will pay \$45, up from \$23.50.

“While we consult with NAITSA executives on all tuition and fee decisions to ensure the student voice is heard, the final decision rests solely with the institution.”

One student was upset to learn of the increase. “I didn’t plan any increase in [mandatory non-instructional] fee. It’s out of my budget, I would say,” said Anastasiia Smoliakova. “I wish it would be more visible somewhere or more communicated through some channels.”

While the students’ association needs to approve any new MNIFs as per the Post-Secondary Learning Act, there is no regulation on adding new fees. NAIT is not required to consult, nor is NAITSA required to approve increases. NAIT met with NAITSA five times between fall 2025 and the end of January 2026 “to gather feedback and share perspectives on the issue.”

However, NAITSA president Lilly Houcher says the students’ association doesn’t support this year’s increases and that their feedback wasn’t heard.

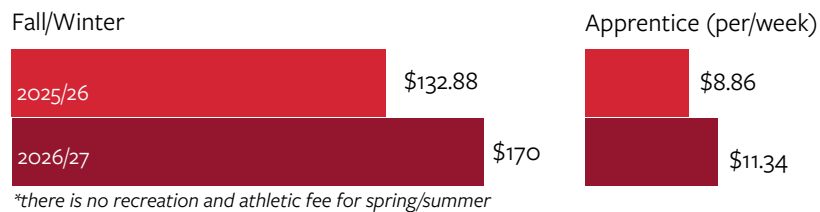
“At the end of the day, these increases are unaffordable and excessive,” she said.

“We advised for no increases, and both were increased by significant and substantial amounts. It’s unsustainable for students.”

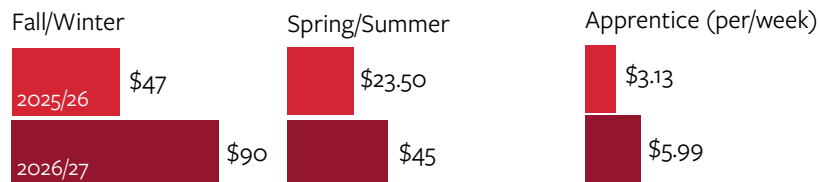
NAIT told *the Nugget* the fees “still remain below full cost recovery,” though this year’s increase brings them closer. MNIFs were not increased in 2025/26.

“While we consult with NAITSA executives on all tuition and fee decisions to ensure the student voice is heard, the final decision rests solely with the institution,” said NAIT VP academic Peter Leclaire in a statement to *the Nugget*.

RECREATION AND ATHLETIC FEE: 27% INCREASE



STUDENT TECHNOLOGY FEE: 91% INCREASE



NAIT students bring emergency preparedness to campus with radio broadcast

By Will Dawson, *Media Intern*

You don't need to be in the middle of the woods or in active danger to learn about survival or hear a helpful PSA. Students from the Disaster and Emergency Management program created a broadcast that brings crisis preparation awareness to NAIT's campus. Encouraging students to think about what to do in case of an emergency.

Mathieu Martel, Dustin Bradford, Susan Ellwood, Isabelle Banks and Kayla Klatt were approached by their instructor about taking on an extra project during their studies to create messaging that helps students be prepared in an emergency.

"If we get people to start thinking about disasters and thinking about how they can be prepared, it actually puts preparedness onto them and gives them agency to make it happen," said Martel. "Sometimes it snows more than it should or rains more than it should. It's not just about the terrorist attack or hurricanes or things like that."

Both Martel and Klatt came to NAIT with experience in disaster management from different sides. Klatt worked with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency during the 2016 wildfires in Fort McMurray.

"If we get people to start thinking about disasters and thinking about how they can be prepared, it actually puts preparedness onto them and gives them agency to make it happen."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Martel used his experience with 3D printing to make face shields to distribute to hospitals. He got to sit on logistics calls between the Quebec Nurse Association and other stakeholders, which ignited his passion for the field.

With this project, the students wanted to spread their message as much as possible through different methods. Martel and Klatt were tasked with a radio broadcast, while Ellwood and Banks decided on a radio interview. The students paired with the Media Communications and Production program to produce and play their broadcasts on NR92, the campus station.

Klatt and Martel's messaging encourages listeners to create a 72-hour go-kit, posing the question, "If you only had 60 seconds to evacuate your home, what would you grab?"

The commercial lists items to include, like key documents, medicine food and other short-term necessities.

"Quite often it's looked at as people think that it won't happen to them or won't happen in their community. But for such a small preparedness measure ... just a 72-hour prepared kit, that will save them immensely in the long run and in the short term after an emergency," said Klatt.

"The main thing is also [for] people to stop being idle in the face of those potential threats and actually give them back agencies," added Martel.

The students aim to explore other options for sharing their messaging, including social media or infographics. They also hope to make it an annual project — current members will share recommendations on how to keep it going and what messaging they may want to share.

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The Great Northern Concrete Toboggan Race is the coolest sport you won't see in the Olympics

Editorial by Dylan Nicholson and Mitchell Janisse, *Freelance Contributors*

Editor's note: Nicholson and Janisse are both Civil Engineering Technology students. Janisse is the GNCTR club president.

In the early weeks of February, while athletes from across Canada began their events in the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy, another group of competitors made their way to the city of London, Ontario. Canadian engineering students from over 20 different Canadian universities and technical schools took on the slopes in the 52nd annual Great Northern Concrete Toboggan Race (GNCTR).

While there are certainly some similarities to events being held at the Olympics, you won't find the kinds of toboggans being raced by these students anywhere else in the world.

Instead of the polished, hardened steel you may find beneath a bobsled, these racing toboggans are instead built upon skis made of concrete.

The competition, which took place from Feb. 4-8 this year, isn't just decided during downhill races, either. There are a series of criteria that must be met to compete, and each has its own winners.

We were assessed on our race results, our theme and more specific features such as our braking and steering systems, frame design and overall project management.

26 students from NAIT travelled to London to participate in the competition. That group didn't represent the many students and teachers who remained in Edmonton, preparing the team for competition.

Preparations start months before the competition

At the beginning of the school year, NAIT's Civil Engineering club began the process of preparing for the contest. The GNCTR club pulled NAIT students from different programs: Civil Engineering Technology, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Instrumentation Engineering Technology and Occupational Health and Safety.

The participants were separated into specific teams, including concrete design, superstructure, mechanical systems, spirit, safety and logistics.

After appointing the executive team and determining the specific team leads, the team hit the ground running to begin preparation for the competition.

The teams collaborated through the next four and a half months to design the toboggan from the ground up. They met critical requirements of design features while operating within the ruleset provided by the GNCTR organizers. Along with other dedicated students, we worked additional hours to prepare, and the work spoke for itself once the concrete skis hit the slopes in London.

Before having the opportunity to race downhill, a technical exhibition was hosted to display the designs of all teams, showcasing the design considerations and overall construction of the toboggan.

Colton Gustafson, technical mechanical lead, Adara Chitze, superstructure lead and Kaden Van Domselaar, steering component designer and fabricator, represented NAIT in the presentation of the overall mechanical systems and superstructure. Meanwhile, Ioachim Talmazan-Obol and Harjot Parhar, the concrete team leads, presented the concrete mix and geometric designs.

We earned a third place finish for braking performance and tied for third place for "King of the Hill," which is determined via head-to-head elimination races. The University of British Columbia's Okanogan campus took home the first place honours.

What's coming up next year

Next year, we'd like to see NAIT students from various clubs join and provide their unique insight, especially those interested in dance, choreography or costume design. A big part of the competition is the spirit of it, which includes things like dancing, chanting and costumes for the different sub-events. But overall, we're really happy with our team's performance on and off the slopes.

Our work is not yet complete — after returning from the competition, we are working to ensure that next year, we have proper feedback, recommendations and funding.

We treat this like we would working in our careers, ensuring that the next



The team sets up during the technical expo.



The mechanical team assembles the steering mechanism.

Photos supplied

team to come in starts off better than the last. That is what this competition is really about, making sure the team continues to grow the tools needed to succeed.

And next year, NAIT students and student clubs like us will get to experience the concrete toboggan race right here in Edmonton, and NAIT will have another opportunity to compete for the top spot. In 2027, the GNCTR will be hosted by the University of Alberta.

With the competition closer to home in 2027, we'd love to see students that were involved in past years — or students who just love the spirit of competition — come out and help cheer NAIT on at the competition.

NAIT culinary students learn fresh is best and social media isn't everything from award-winning Chef in Residence



Chef Alex Kim prepares a dish during a demonstration for NAIT Culinary Arts students during his week-long residency at NAIT.

Photo by Abraham Arrieta/The Nugget

By Ibrahim Basim, *Masthead Contributor*

At NAIT, students training for careers in culinary are surrounded by polished dishes, trending techniques and constant inspiration online. But according to NAIT's 2026 Hokanson Chef in Residence Alex Kim, that exposure may work against the craft of culinary arts.

"I think that nowadays, you're more exposed to ... this worldwide information about cooking," said Kim about social media trends.

"You tend to feel a little bit rushed because you want to do better, higher-end or this elevated, advanced type of cooking right away. But then, you know, in the beginning stage, you really have to focus on the basic skills and focus on building the foundation."

Kim, a 2011 NAIT Culinary Arts graduate now working as culinary director at Five Sails in Vancouver, thinks the disconnect between expectation and reality is a challenge for students entering the industry.

"I think they just really have to know that what they see on Instagram or TV is not everything about cooking, right?"

He suggests students work in local kitchens, even if it means starting small to see for themselves if they're comfortable working in that environment.

"You can start as a dishwasher and see what it's like working in the real kitchen. And probably, you know, give yourself about a month and see if it's something that you can pursue as a career," Kim said.

Instead of chasing complex dishes early, Kim emphasizes understanding

ingredients at a fundamental level. Knowing how to tell when ingredients are fresh is the first step, he explains. Then, it's about how to handle them.

"Good foods start from great ingredients," he said. "My passion for cooking actually started with learning how to respect this whole process."

He draws inspiration from his South Korean grandparents, who are farmers. "When I was little, I think that standing beside my grandmother, picking this fresh produce from her backyard, and then carefully handle them, wash them and cook with the fresh ingredients," said Kim. "I think that that's something that I learned, how to respect ingredients."

NAIT students also learned about techniques and ingredients directly from Kim during his residency, and hearing that perspective from a high-profile chef who stood in their position adds credibility that social media videos can't.

"He was just in the same exact spot. So he kind of knows. He knows how we feel. He knows how we see things and how we are viewing the program," said Dialo Campos, a NAIT Culinary Arts student.

For students like Campos, that sense of possibility proves that success in the industry is achievable but built through time and consistent effort.

"I think it feels hopeful because sometimes this industry can feel kind of hard and like a very hard grind to get up to that level. But seeing so many people from the same program be so successful, it really inspires you to work a little harder and have hope that you're going to be successful."

Encouraging political engagement in a polytechnic

How student clubs are starting the conversation

By Rafael Luis Flores, *Opinion Editor*

During the Fall 2025 NAITSA Clubs Showcase, a new club appeared that was hard to ignore. With their bright red banners, hammer-and-sickle logos and Soviet-style fonts on their signs, there was no mistaking that the communists had set up shop at NAIT.

The Revolutionary Communists at NAIT (RCN) is a NAITSA club started by NAIT students who are members of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Canada, a far-left political organization that is primarily Marxist in its ideological orientation.

Club president Jet Boutin, an Electrical Engineering Technology student, did not mince words about the club's goals.

"The main thing we do as a political party is to build a political force that's able to overthrow capitalism. That's obviously the end goal of everything that we do," they said.

However, Boutin, who uses they/them pronouns, also admitted that as a new organization within NAIT, the club is still at that "feeling out" stage to measure how receptive NAIT students will be towards them.

"We're just trying to find people who are dedicated and want to fight for that cause," said Boutin. They added that universities and colleges are a good place to find other eager young people.

But the caution is warranted given that NAIT is not exactly known for being an ideological hot spot. At present, there are only three campus clubs that are political or ideological in nature, including the Student Conservatives at NAIT (SCN) who did not reply to *the Nugget's* interview requests for this article.

The lack of political clubs on campus does not necessarily indicate political apathy on the part of students. Most academic programs at NAIT last for only two years or less. Many of NAIT's intense, hands-on programs don't leave space for any organization that might require considerable dedication and resources to maintain an active status. Even just joining a club can seem like a lot on top of a full schedule, labs and weekly assignments.

This is something Boutin has noticed as well. "NAIT in particular, there's not a lot of activism or ... explicitly political activities happening on campus, at least from what I've seen."

They add, "It's much more of an attitude just like, 'I'm here to get a job.'"

A special requirement

As a club that has political advocacies, NAITSA requires RCN and other political clubs to place a disclaimer on all their promotional material that states the views they express are theirs alone and do not represent those of NAIT or NAITSA.

According to NAITSA campus clubs manager Rose Martin Baumgartner, this additional requirement exists because "there is a potential for audiences to perceive NAITSA or NAIT as endorsing the views presented by these groups."

In an email to *the Nugget*, she adds that the disclaimer is there to ensure it is clear that "NAITSA and NAIT remain non-partisan and do not take positions on political or ideological views."

Boutin says they have no issues with NAITSA's requirements as these have not prevented RCN from their "bread and butter work" of setting up promotional campaigns or holding public presentations.

But Boutin noticed that RCN was the only club placing disclaimers on their promotions, noting that they do not "see the [Student Conservatives at NAIT] needing to make a statement."

The other two clubs tagged as "social justice" on Ooks Life (Student Conservatives at NAIT and Young Workers for Peace) do not have a disclaimer on their Ooks Life. But the Student Conservatives did have a disclaimer on posters seen in late March promoting the club's bonfire event in April.

Baumgartner said the disclaimer requirement is communicated to the leaders of political or ideological clubs during their onboarding stage, but the responsibility is on the student executive teams after that.



Members of the Revolutionary Communists at NAIT smile while promoting their club during NAITSA's Clubs Showcase. *Photo via NAITSA*

While she mentioned the RCN's diligence in consistently placing the disclaimer on all their promotions, she acknowledges that the absence of the disclaimer on the Ooks Life landing pages of other political or ideological clubs is an "opportunity for us [NAITSA] to review our internal process to ensure greater consistency moving forward."

Going against the grain

Aside from NAITSA's internal requirements, there are challenges in the bigger picture. It's hard enough to try to turn a non-politically inclined student body into a politically aware one.

But when the idea being promoted is almost the exact opposite of what is the predominant thought, then this affects the ability of people to be open to new ideas. I am, of course, talking about Alberta's well-earned reputation of being a bulwark of conservatism in Canada.

With their bright red banners, hammer-and-sickle logos and Soviet-style fonts on their signs, there was no mistaking that the communists had set up shop at NAIT.

But as Boutin sees it, the RCN provides value to the NAIT student community in a couple different ways. First, they provide an alternative to the predominant political ideology by giving clear political perspectives that explain why current events happen the way they do.

And second, they provide a space or outlet for like-minded and curious students to be able to discuss politics freely and show that these ideas aren't as rare or fringe as they are made out to be.

Political clubs are not the norm at NAIT, unlike at University of Alberta or even MacEwan University. But as Boutin said, young people are in "a very precarious position."

"Especially right now where it's extremely hard to get a job. There's no prospect of owning a home. Starting a family, for many people, is not even a real possibility that they can even imagine. And so people are just kind of losing faith in the system," said Boutin.

It's an optimal time for students to have their say in how the system should work, and student voices should not be limited to university political science majors. But students at polytechnics or trade schools need to start somewhere if they want to see a change — and NAIT could be the place.

Beyond the caffeine boost: How to make coffee a more meaningful daily ritual



By Ibrahim Basim, *Masthead Contributor*

Photos by Ash Wijensinghe, *Masthead Contributor*

For many NAIT students, coffee is part of the daily routine. It is a quick stop before class, a late-night study companion, or simply an excuse to get a break from the books. For NAIT Students' Association VP external Robin Murillo, however, coffee is much more than a caffeine boost. It's a hobby that turned into an appreciation for the craft behind every cup.

Murillo developed his passion for coffee during the COVID-19 pandemic. When many people were stuck at home and had nothing to do, he began exploring new interests online.

"At the time you don't really know what to do, right? So you can't go out normally if you want to drink coffee, all the stores are closed," Murillo said.

What started as casual curiosity — or "YouTube university," as Murillo puts it — quickly developed into a deeper fascination. Watching coffee brewers and roasters like Tetsu Kasuya online introduced Murillo to the techniques and culture behind specialty coffee.

"He was a famous person in the coffee world in Japan," said Murillo. "I was seeing his videos how to brew, pour over coffee. And to me, it sounded really cool. And it's very simple and I got drawn into it."

Murillo's interest grew into a hobby that now influences how he experiences coffee wherever he travels.

"If I go to different places, not just in Canada, but different countries, I make sure to at least try different coffee roasters," he explained. "It's like a chef, but they're the ones roasting the coffee."

Trying different roasters and brewing styles has given him a deeper respect for the drink, and he can now distinguish between beans from different parts of the world.

"And when you try it from, let's say, Japan all the way to Europe or all the way to North America, the roasting process could be a bit different and the taste

would be different for your coffee, too," he added.

While many students rely on coffee shops, Murillo believes a great cup of coffee can be made at home without spending a lot of money. The key, he shares, is focusing on vacuum-sealed freshness and a few basic tools, like a gooseneck kettle, a hand-grinder and a scale.

"You don't want carbon dioxide to go to your coffee ... the taste will become more stale," Murillo explained. "That's why it's highly encouraged when you brew your own coffee, you will grind it when you're about to drink it."

"For me, coffee is like food. Everyone should be open to it."

Grinding beans fresh and measuring for accuracy makes a noticeable difference in the flavour, which is why coffee tastes so good at specialty cafés.

According to Murillo, many commercial coffees lose their freshness long before they reach store shelves, so he encourages buying directly from roasters for a better home-brewed cup.

"For commercial coffees, they've been roasted for months," he said. "For roasters, they were just roasted even just this week or last week. Coffee changes too, depending on the roast profile, whether it's light, it's dark, and at the same time, how you brew it."

Murillo encourages students to experiment with different beans and brewing methods to discover what they enjoy most. Coffee culture has evolved significantly over the years, and specialty coffee now focuses on highlighting the unique flavours of different beans.

"I think it's better to go there and to see and because in the coffee world ...



there's a second wave, there's a third wave. So now we're on a third wave. It's what we call the specialty coffee," Murillo said.

While second wave coffee production is a step up from pre-ground first wave products, third wave coffee focuses on freshness, origin transparency and the overall experience of drinking a unique, high-quality brew. This kind of coffee is good for pour-overs.

"The thing with pour-over, yes, it could be relaxing, it could be meditative, but it takes time. At least five to 10 minutes," Murillo said. "And not a lot of students do have the time."

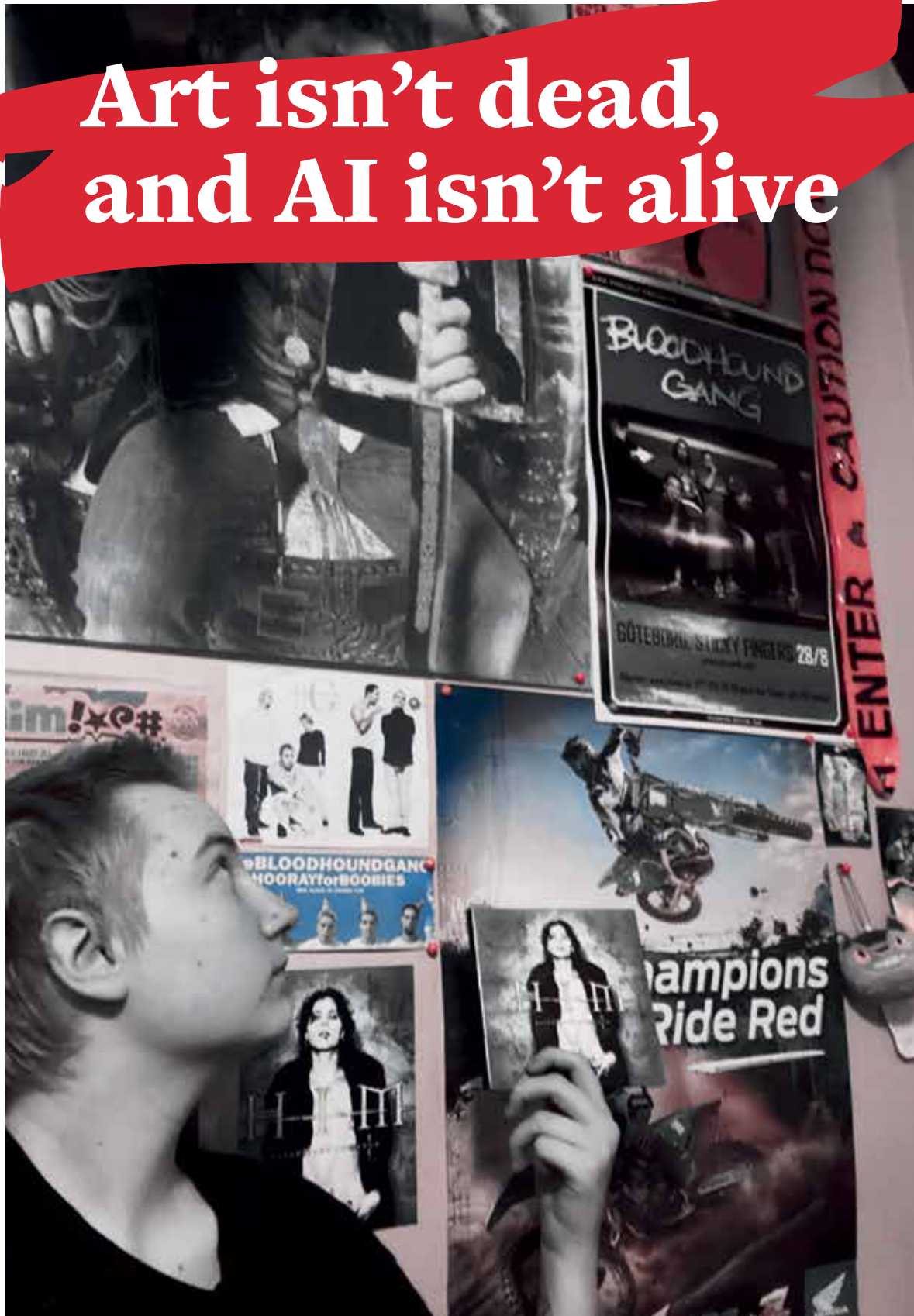
Ultimately, Murillo says exploring coffee is about curiosity and personal taste. "I think it really depends on that student," he said. Some students just need that quick caffeine boost, so instant coffee does the trick.

"But for me, coffee is like food. Everyone should be open to it. Try different coffee shops and you will see the difference in terms of the coffee beans," he said.

For students willing to experiment, whether that means trying different types of beans, brewing at home or visiting local roasters, coffee can become more than standing in the Tim Hortons line between classes. It can turn into a small daily ritual that makes busy student life a little more meaningful.



Art isn't dead, and AI isn't alive



popularity and growing amount of content made me afraid for the future of media. Will this kind of content become normalized?

The rapid advancement of AI had me worried that all the things I loved would disappear.

As an adult, I indulge in media that makes me feel more connected to both my childhood and my identity. I practiced this by starting a physical collection of the things I consumed and appreciated.

Most of the media I collected was from my childhood, the early 2000s. It connected me to a time where gender stereotypes were pushed on me through my peers, marketing and pop culture. I don't believe in gender stereotypes, but the times were really like that. I was watching and playing what the times and media told me was "made" for girls. Now, I get to do all the things the other boys got to do, too.

BioShock for my beat up old Xbox 360, MTV shows on DVD, Limp Bizkit on tape and Bloodhound Gang albums on CD are just a few of the things I don't want to lose to the times. It was this deep, personal connection that led me to develop a fear of losing my outlet of self expression due to the AI take over, or what was —in my mind — the death of art.

I find comfort in knowing that, despite how isolating the age of AI feels, I'm not the only one who feels this way.

Nicky Houseman, a Media Communications and Production student doing her practicum at CKUA Radio Network, shares her own experience with physical media. Houseman collects VHS tapes, cassettes, CDs and vinyl records.

"A little heavier on the vinyl records," she said. "Because I can place them on my wall and make a piece of art, like they're all integrated pieces of art, just automatically."

She loves looking through the used record bins at local shops like Blackbyrd Myozik and the Junque Cellar. It's a "reverence for all that comes before," she explained.

"For me, it's about the joy of being able to pick something up and look at it and then hear it, and also hear the time and the weatheredness of it."

In the last couple of years, AI wasn't the only thing on the rise. Houseman, who also grew up in the 2000s, believes most people from her generation or earlier have an appreciation for physical media collections. She's not the only one who has picked up on this.

"Music fans — especially Gen Z — are getting a little disenchanted with new-fangled digital ways. Tired of having to have an app and a subscription for everything, there's a movement afoot to return to somewhat simpler times," wrote Canadian broadcaster and music writer Alan Cross in a *Global News* article.

DVD and VHS collectors are also surprising store owners with the demand of "outdated" media all over the world, and Edmonton is no exception.

As the desire to own media instead of just accessing it through streaming services rises, there's been more visibility about the younger generations' fascination with the past. It's given way for event trends like vintage media fairs, and businesses are noticing a growing demand for physical media.

Joe French and Melissa Sherwood, the owners of the store Movie World in Stony Plain, haven't seen this type of demand since the heyday of movie rental stores like Blockbuster and Rogers Video.

Words and images by Will Dawson, Media Intern

In the 21st century, all it takes is one quick scroll on any social media page to see an abundance of strange and bland content. Short videos with disembodied, flat voices, frames that blend together and objects or people that really don't look quite right — the dead giveaways of AI.

I've seen it everywhere. *AI fever* is the only way I know how to describe it.

It started with art; learning from and stealing the works of real human creatives. Then it came for music. I listened as even my friends streamed AI song covers and mashups.

By this point, AI had completely taken over the internet. Videos, social media posts, books, kids shows and more. The words don't make sense, the visuals blend together and it all feels so empty.

Collectively, the internet has nicknamed this type of content 'slop.'

AI slop can best be described as AI-made content of any kind that metaphorically melts your brain with its constant churning out of new trends and soulless content — we saw it with *Fruit Love Island*, an AI-generated series that gained hundreds of millions of views in less than a month. AI slop's sudden

“Just in the last couple of years alone, we’re noticing more and more younger generations coming in and picking up DVD, Blu-ray and even VHS,” said French. He’s surprised by my generation’s interest in VHS, but sees it similarly to collecting vinyl.

Maybe it’s the “idea of it being retro,” he speculates. “The whole analog of physical media is really, really booming right now.”

I find comfort in knowing that, despite how isolating the age of AI feels, I’m not the only one who feels this way.

Knowing I’m not alone in this dystopia, I feel a bit more prepared for the future. I feel proud to stand with human art over the onslaught of AI slop.

“It’s hard to justify AI music in an era where it’s already so saturated with artists who are trying to come out of the woodwork and find their own audience,” said Houseman. “If the barrier of entry is find a way to make music, I think there’s a passion that is lost when you just ask something to make you music.”

Instead of asking “something” to make music, she suggests asking someone — or learning how to yourself.

“Making music is difficult, but it feels wrong to put AI music on the same platform as artists, as human people, as human artists,” she explained.

“I think [it’s] just that,” said Sherwood about the importance of human media in the age of AI. “The fact that it’s real and it’s not fake ... it’s real content with real humans. It’s not just made up on a computer.”

But French still worries about the future of filmmaking. “Look at some of these AI-generated videos where they’re taking actors and actresses who have passed that are now being revived in these big AI-generated things where it’s like, well, what’s the point of having human beings at all in film or the film industry?”

I’ve also heard predictions about human media disappearing and AI replacing the entertainment industry. There is no way to know for sure what will happen, and I don’t blame artists for feeling helpless. It’s no lie that AI is advancing rapidly.

One day, it very well might all be gone. Maybe nobody will want to make art when a robot is doing it for us. But instead of fear, I feel hope — because I see people like Gen Z and others buying, collecting, trading and more importantly, loving these creations we already have.

Our overflowing bookshelves prove that art isn’t dead, and in the possible dystopian future of AI-only media, collecting is an act of retaliation.



The cold, hard truth about on-campus addiction: We’re not doing enough

By Samantha Lajeunesse, Masthead Contributor

NAIT is a polytechnic that has a bar on campus, and that might sound like a good thing — having once dreamed of a life in the trades, I can respect the desire for an adult beverage at the end of the day. Trades people have extraordinarily hard jobs. Between the hours and the physical labour, the mental and physical toll is incalculable. It has me wondering: how do these people push through so much, and so hard, for so long?

The statistics show a scary answer: addiction.

It’s a cold hard truth that addiction affects people in trades more than most other careers, and this often can start in post-secondary. This is exactly why education should be about more than just textbooks. Post-secondary institutions like NAIT have a duty to educate all their students, but especially the 10,000+ apprentices they train every year, on how to be responsible and mitigate the irresponsible or dangerous lifestyle that can come with a career in the trades. As someone whose partner is addicted to both alcohol and substances, I’ve noticed a significant gap in resources specific to students.

Addiction is a demon in disguise. It disguises itself as not only substance abuse, but alcoholism, which is a big concern for a lot of college-age people.

A 2025 survey by Statistics Canada showed that

99 per cent of those who had drunk in the past 30 days “experienced at least one alcohol-related harm in that time due to their own drinking.”

At NAIT, students fresh out of high school can head to the campus bar as soon as they get to campus. The Nest is a great place to hang out and make friends, but the concern is when partying becomes the daily goal. Bars can create an atmosphere to lose control, which can open the door to experiment with other things in a more isolated environment. It’s a slippery slope to binge drinking and substance use.

And peer pressure is a hell of a thing. Even if someone isn’t in the scene of binge drinking and substance abuse, it can be a quick pull to it if your friends are all drinking heavily and experimenting with drugs.

So how do we combat these fears? Mental health is starting to become a prevalent conversation in society and there are services for addiction help, like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

But there’s a gap in resources specifically for students in active addiction, and an even bigger gap for families of addicts. NAIT does offer mental health resources, primarily in the way of recommendations for provincial and national

resources. NAITSA also offers the Peer Support program, and their staff are trained on things like substance abuse.

I have reached out to many provincial and national resources, but I always felt it was pretty generic. Nothing geared to me as a person or a student — just me as a person within a group of people in similar situations. So, I appreciate how NAIT offers peer support for my personal struggles, but there should be something more specific.

The Government of Alberta recently released new funding to post-secondary institutions to assist in recovery for addicts. While NAIT isn’t specifically getting any funding, there are grants they can — and should — apply for.

And while this doesn’t specify any funding to support the supporters, getting addicts into recovery and refocused on their studies and their future is a great start and a good direction for the Government of Alberta.

As a student, the struggles in my personal life have definitely affected my studies, and my grades last year are absolutely reflective of how distracting addiction can be for the addict, the friends and the family. With this new funding to post-secondary, maybe there is help for the addict and the family on the horizon.

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NAITSA disqualifies losing candidate from 2020 executive council race

By Rafael Luis Flores, *Opinion Editor*

Fresh from disqualifying a losing candidate during the 2026 NAITSA Executive Council elections, the chief returning officer (CRO) has announced the disqualification of a largely forgotten presidential candidate that ran during the 2020 elections.

The disqualified candidate, Chester Arthur Welles, or as his friends call him, Chart, was a Culinary Arts student when he ran for NAITSA president. At that time, he held the unenviable record of getting the lowest number of votes for an EC candidate in the history of NAITSA.

The CRO explained that the disqualification was brought about by a recently discovered video of Welles drunkenly declaring to classmates in an undisclosed adult entertainment club his intentions of running for NAITSA President.

In the video, Welles can be heard saying: "Vote for me in February! I'll lower food prices on campus!" The video was posted on the Instagram account of Stacy Aria "Star" Bucks, a staff member in that club.

"We find that this violates two NAITSA bylaws. First, it violates rule 7.15.1 which prohibits premature campaigning," said the CRO. The video was posted in December 2019, well before the February 2020 campaign period. "Second, it violates rule 7.14.6 which prohibits campaigning outside of NAIT's premises," they added.

The 2020 NAITSA EC election season was

a particularly turbulent one, with the sudden resignation of the winning presidential candidate and the subsequent election of another candidate in a by-election.

"Somehow, amidst those happenings and Welles' insignificant three-vote performance, he just fell into the cracks and people forgot all about him. But due to the seriousness of his violations, NAITSA wants to formally put this on record and penalize Mr. Welles," the CRO said.

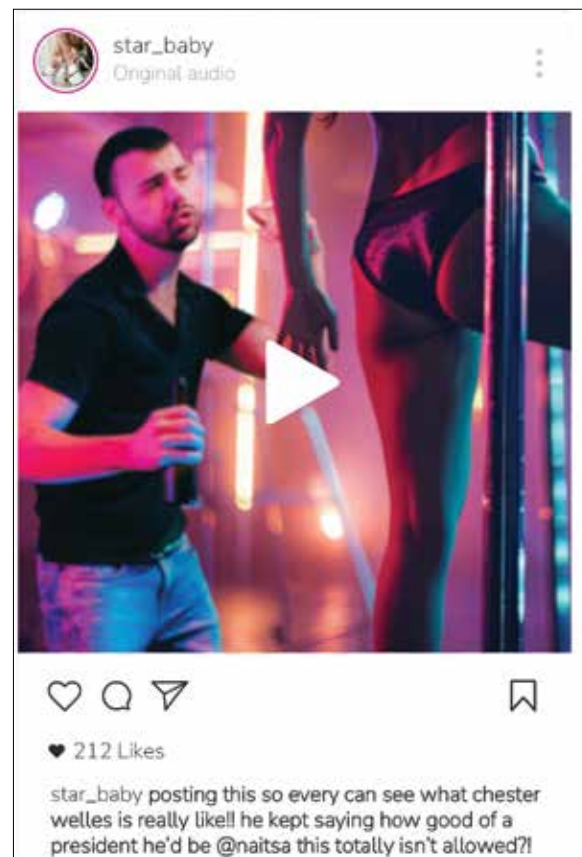
Welles was unable to hide his disappointment during comments after the announcement. "I don't care. I have long moved on from that election."

Having graduated in 2021, Welles has since built a successful business providing and operating reputedly substandard food services for post-secondary schools in Alberta.

Hardy Fisher, a NAIT alumnus and former classmate of Welles, said Welles was not able to reach more voters during the campaign. "Chart meant well, but he just couldn't penetrate enough ... of the electorate. You really have to reach the inner sectors to reach a good spot where voters think you have the potential to make them happy. I don't blame him. He had a really short campaign period."

The penalty for Welles' violations is a four-year ban on running in any future NAITSA elections, but the CRO said the ban is "applied retroactively."

"The combined four-year ban is deemed to have



The video posted to Instagram in which Welles was seen pre-campaigning. *Photo via Instagram*

expired in 2024. This means he is free to run again for any NAITSA governance position should he choose to enroll again as a student."

Budget cuts force NAIT to replace beloved taco in a bag with coffee in a bag

By Rafael Luis Flores, *Opinion Editor*

Due to a realignment of budgeting priorities, the NAIT Student Orientation (NSO) committee will no longer be serving the popular taco in a bag to new students beginning in the spring 2026 term. Instead, the committee has announced that they will be switching to coffee in a bag for the free lunch offering.

"We want our new NAIT students to have a realistic idea of how the next two to four years of their student life will be like. They will be drinking a lot of coffee to stay awake while studying, and more coffee in various club and campus activities. So they might as well get started during the NSO," said Polly Teknik, a member of the committee.

But it was not an easy decision to scrap taco in a bag.

"We have been offering taco in a bag for such a long time now that it has become part of NAIT's culture. And no one really minds if their burps still smell like tacos even 12 hours after eating it," said Alyssa Dorito, head of the NSO committee.

Dorito said she was "shocked and disappointed" when the revised budget was revealed to the committee.

"We could only afford to give free drinks and bags to new students. We had to make the most of the funds we have and package this into something relevant to students," she said.

To test the reception of coffee in a bag, the NSO committee set up an experiment. Volunteers were given different amounts of coffee in a bag, which they had to consume in one sitting.

"In our findings, the group that was given an equivalent of 750 mg of caffeine was the one that displayed the best possible behaviour expected of a NAIT student," said Dorito.

Tecnik expressed her excitement for the upcoming implementation of coffee in a bag.

"We want to show that NAIT is school that encourages sustainability, so the hot coffee will be placed in paper bags. This will encourage students

to drink it right away. We will, of course, provide paper straws."



A promotional image used to advertise the change to coffee in a bag. NAIT clarified that at NSO, students will be drinking from a paper bag and paper straw, not the pouch pictured. *Photo supplied*

NAIT installs GPA-activated fire alarms to combat exam avoidance

By Rafael Luis Flores, Opinion Editor

Art by Macy Jackson, Freelance Contributor

In an attempt to address the long-running practice of students maliciously setting off fire alarms during final examinations, NAIT has recently installed new, state of the art fire alarms that can only be activated by students with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 and above.

The new fire alarms have an integrated fingerprint and retinal scanner that would enable it to immediately search the academic records of the NAIT student attempting to set off the alarm.

“Look, we all know that students who actually study for their exams have no reason to set off the alarms. If you’re willing to ruin it for everybody, you’re probably about to fail that damned exam,” said Nate Ookman, facilities administrator, to explain the grade requirement.

Ookman adds that he is not worried at all when an actual fire does occur because NAIT “produces hundreds of 3.5 GPA students.”

“I mean, have you been to LinkedIn? Basically every single NAIT student there has posted their Dean’s Honour Roll certificate at least four times. It’s kind of annoying, really. ‘Oooh look at me, I’m smart.’ Dude, no one cares. Anyway, there’s no shortage of qualified people to set off the alarm.”

NAIT Protective Services welcomed this development that is intended to minimize distractions during the crucial final exam season when students are most vulnerable to stress and emotional breakdowns.

A Protective Services staff member who wanted to remain anonymous provided more context. “We used to be able to catch these pranksters through CCTV, but they’ve gotten creative,” he said.

According to the staff member, budget cuts have impacted the CCTV recording storage.

“Our CCTV can no longer record because they had to renovate a [expletive] washroom in T-building. So someone has to watch these camera feeds all the time. All these pranksters have to do is deliver a box of donuts to us just before they set off the alarm.”

The installation of the new fire alarms is being done in phases and is expected to be completed by the end of 2026. As of now, only the CAT building has the alarms fully installed. According to Ookman, the alarms in CAT were prioritized because the building is a hot spot for false alarms.

“I mean, when was the last time you heard this sort of thing happening in the other buildings? Nah, only business students do this [expletive].”



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Tuition fees reportedly funding mascot's 'essential' luxury lifestyle



Drake and the Ook party outside CAT during the Student Technology Summit. Students expressed concerns about the cost of the event. Photo by Alleah Boisvert/The Nugget

By Pia Vistro, Digital Content Creator

NAIT has reportedly increased investment into what the Board of Governors describe as the “essential operational needs” of its beloved mascot. Students, however, are beginning to question whether those needs should include luxury events, multiple outfit changes and what appears to be a growing list of high-end perks.

Concerns first surfaced after the Ook’s Student Technology Summit, which featured caviar, helicopter rides and even a live performance by hip-hop and R&B artist Drake. While the event was marketed as a way for students to network with industry, some attendees noted that the scale of the celebration felt a bit excessive.

“I just went for the free food,” said Tanner McTuition, a Digital Media and IT student. “But then I saw the helicopters outside CAT and I was like... whose budget is this coming from?”

According to unofficial reports, the summit is only one example of the mascot’s increasingly ostentatious lifestyle. Sources claim that the Ook maintains an extensive wardrobe tailored for various campus appearances, including several gold chains and customized sneakers for every day of the week.

“Every time I see him, it’s a different outfit,” Poutienne McGraw, a second-year student said. “Meanwhile I’ve been rotating the same three hoodies all semester.”

When asked about the apparent increase in mascot-related spending, NAIT representatives emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong campus identity.

“The Ook plays a vital role in fostering school pride and creating a sense of community,” Meryl Lo Miclaire, a spokesperson, said. “These initiatives are designed to engage students in meaningful and memorable ways.”

NAIT did not comment directly on the cost of the summit or the reported expansion of the mascot’s wardrobe.

Sources also allege that the Ook now has access to a private washroom facility, recently upgraded to meet what officials described as “modern comfort standards.” This development raised further questions about campus spending priorities among students.

“It’s sound-proof?!” Electrical Engineering student Dustin Grieger commented. “I knew it was impossible not to hear a giant bird taking a [expletive].”

Despite the lack of official figures, students have continued to speculate about where their tuition and mandatory non-instructional fees are being allocated, with some joking that the mascot may be one of the best-funded figures on campus.

“At this point, I just want to know if he has a better budget than my program,” Lankwenta Honorlocke, a Denturist Technology student said. “Because it’s starting to feel like he does.”

NAIT has not confirmed any plans for future mascot-related events, but students say they will be watching closely and possibly reconsidering their career paths.

“If that’s where the money is going,” Honorlocke continued, “I might just apply to be the mascot next year.”

Connor McDavid commits to NAIT Ooks for 2026/27 season amid eligibility changes



Connor McDavid, pictured above in his new and very real chef coat, has joined the Ooks for the 2026/27 season.

Photo by the Nugget and definitely not a CIBC commercial

By Geono Aloisio, Sports Editor

In a move that shocked the hockey world and left fans wondering, “Is this a joke?”, it is now official: Connor McDavid is joining the NAIT Ooks men’s hockey team for the 2026/27 season.

The NHL superstar made the announcement Tuesday morning at a press conference held in front of a recently “renovated” student lounge in the T-building featuring marble floors, leather seating and a sign that said: “Room reserved for Connor McDavid only.”

Both NAIT and McDavid denied that the lounge was reserved specifically for McDavid, even though he entered after the press conference ended, with a security guard standing beside the door as he began connecting his phone to the Bluetooth speakers to play “Pink Pony Club” by Chappell Roan.

The decision for the three-time league MVP to join a collegiate hockey team follows what NAIT officials described as “recent eligibility adjustments,” though details surrounding the changes remain unclear.

McDavid, widely regarded as one of the best players in the world, stated he is “excited for a new challenge” and is looking forward to “scoring 10-20 points a game” to lead the Ooks back to a conference championship.

“I just felt like I needed to push myself by beating a bunch of 20-some-year olds who are trying to get an education,” McDavid said. “It’s been a dream of mine to experience college life, and to finally have the chance to play for the Ooks is something I’ve been working towards since I first got drafted into the NHL.”

In addition to joining the men’s hockey team, McDavid confirmed he will be enrolling in NAIT’s Culinary Arts program with a specialization in pre-game pasta.

“I’ve always been passionate about learning how to properly make my pre-

game pastas,” he said. “It’s something I can fall back on if hockey doesn’t work out ... or make a few extra bucks to give the Oilers more cap space to sign a better goalie and win a cup.”

NAIT’s head coach praised the acquisition, emphasizing McDavid’s character over his on-ice résumé. “We just liked his work ethic,” the coach said. “He’s a guy who comes in, keeps his head down and does the little things right.”

Current Ooks players appeared unfazed by the announcement. “Yeah, I think I’ve heard of him,” one teammate said. “Didn’t he play junior somewhere?”

In unrelated news, NAIT officials have acknowledged a minor discrepancy of approximately \$12 million in the institution’s annual budget. Administrators have assured staff and students that the issue is “not a big deal.”

When asked whether the budget discrepancy was connected to McDavid’s arrival, NAIT representatives reiterated that the two matters are “completely unrelated.”

“We treat all students equally,” a spokesperson said, adding that both the institution and McDavid have said that no special treatment will be given.

McDavid confirmed he is “just another student” and expects to be treated the same as everyone else, aside from what he described as “a few minor accommodations related to ice time, general on-ice production, study areas and private doodle grooming by the Veterinary Technology program.”

“Lenny and I are really enjoying the student study area. I can see the whole city from the eighth floor, and for some reason I don’t ever see any students in this building, so it’s nice and quiet,” said McDavid, who claimed he’s only ever seen the Oook using the area.

“Sometimes, the executives even deliver meals to me. Must be a perk of the Culinary Arts program,” he shrugged.

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STATE OF THE OOKS

Q&A with NAIT's Athletics Director

By Geono Aloisio, *Sports Editor*

The 2025/26 Ooks season is in the books. All the teams have packed up for the summer, so we sat down with Jordan Richey, NAIT's Director of Athletics and Recreation to get some insight into how the department viewed this season and what they have in store for next season and beyond.

Answers have been edited for clarity and length.

Usually, there are few teams that have an underwhelming season, but over the past three years almost every team has had some sort of success. Do you think this success is perfect timing with lots of veteran players on each roster? Or is this something that will be more regular in the years to come?

Jordan Richey: I think this is the start of something special for NAIT athletics. With the successes the teams had in their first and second year, you knew it was going to get better. And what's happened now as well is we have a tremendous amount of support from senior leadership. You see our president coming out to a nationals banquet and they're showcasing that.

They have the utmost support for NAIT athletics, which is good. People see that, they want to be part of this. NAIT athletics has become a flagship program in the ACAC. Student athletes coming out of high school know about NAIT athletics because of the successes our teams have had.

So, I don't anticipate a regression. I don't. There might be a slight regression this year with the number of student athletes we had, but I still think we're going to recruit top level student athletes to NAIT because of the experiences that our vets have just had.

We're trending the right way for all these things. One of these years, we're going to win all golds, which is going to be amazing.

Where do you think NAIT is viewed at the national and provincial stage after this season?

JR: I think we're regarded as one of the flagship programs in the ACAC. And we should be. For the number of students we have, we're one of the larger institutions in the ACAC. So, we do have a lot more students to draw from. So, we should always be up there.

At the national level, we have a lot of teams that did go to nationals. Not only always winning everything, but we had a men's curling silver medal. We had a lot of badminton medals. Every badminton player that went to nationals from NAIT earned a medal, which was pretty special, including a national championship.

And when you start going to nationals, you start seeing the same top end programs. Vancouver Island University is always there. Humber is always there from different conferences. And I think NAIT is now starting to be one of those programs that people expect to come out of the ACAC.

Another notable takeaway from this year was hosting the men's volleyball national tournament. How did you feel that went and what the feedback was like from people around the country?

JR: The feedback's been extremely positive. You never know how these things are going to go. I've been to a lot of them in my time. And that's an awful lot of planning, an awful lot of work. You need buy-in from a lot of people. And I felt NAIT did that — they bought in. We had a lot of attendance from staff, students. We absolutely filled the place.

There wasn't a spare space in the place. We had standing room only for that gold medal game.



Photo by Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget

And you just sit back and you say, "This is why we do it."

This is what college sport is all about, to provide a meaningful student experience, especially at the top level going for a national championship. And I'm very proud of our NAIT staff and volunteers.

We had over 100 volunteers for this and it went off very well, but it's exhausting. It's very hard, long hours working the national championship. So, I really want to thank everybody for all the work they did.

The comments I've received is that this was one of the best nationals ever. So, when you get that kind of feedback, it kind of makes you feel, "Oh, that's good."

NAIT will also be hosting the men's soccer nationals tournament in the fall. How is that process going?

JR: I think I kind of was joking with our staff the other day, like, "Hey, gotta flip that switch off and turn this switch on and let's go." The good thing is, I think our team is in hosting mode. We kind of understand what it is.

There's a lot of templates we can use from the volleyball nationals, a lot of successes that we can take from that. And even learning experiences of what we could have done better, we can now actually use that. The challenging one for the men's soccer is that it's off-site, where we have to pivot and figure out how to bring the NAIT staff and students out to the Scottish Edmonton Soccer Dome to watch this and cheer on our teams.

So we're going to figure that out. But a lot of the templates, the things that worked really well with men's volleyball, we're just going to rinse, repeat and do that for men's soccer because we knew it provided students with a meaningful experience.

Is there any update on the soccer field and when that might be coming?

JR: Yeah, it's not a positive update, but it is an update nonetheless. We are currently searching for a home for our soccer field and soccer teams for next year. We previously played games out in Sherwood Park, and because of the



amount of teams that they have, we're not going to be able to have that as our home.

Not ideal, but we have to spend some time doing that. It might increase the urgency of we need to bring the soccer field to campus here eventually, or a partnership.

We're still hoping to have it. No talks have been made about an official field on campus. I know potentially Blatchford would be a good location, but we're not there yet with a final plan. But we do have to find a home for our soccer fields, soccer teams.

When we sat down this time last year to recap things, you said if you were to sit down a year from then you'd be happy to see some improvement. With all the teams making the playoffs, a few more medals and championships, NAIT hosting the men's volleyball national championships and every team maintaining their high GPAs, how would you say the program did on those goals?

JR: I do remember that interview. And I think on all three we actually hit home runs because we did get more medals than last year. Not only did we get more medals, we hosted an amazingly successful men's volleyball championship.

And then our grade point averages, our fall GPA, we did not lose one student athlete to marks. That's the first in my time at NAIT that we've never lost even one student athlete.

So, I think we're trending the right way.

But how high can you go? I don't know. I guess we can only try to keep it getting better, and I do feel that our department is getting better each and every year. I'm excited about next year.

If you're gonna ask me that same question, "What do you want to accomplish?" it'd be very similar answers. We'd like to see more gold medals next year. We'd like to host the first-ever indoor national men's soccer championship. That has never been done before. And we want people to say it's a success. We should be hosting indoors in November all the time.

And then I'd like to see a high retention rate, because we're going to have a lot of first year student athletes coming in with the number of graduating players we had this year. I want to see retention after that first year for our student athletes so we can start building another kind of dynasty.

Where do you see the future of the athletics program going? What's the next goal you have set out to tackle?

We're starting to excel in a lot of the sports, so where do we want to go here?

I think for myself, our stretch goals as a department is to start building alumni with all of our teams. Our men's hockey alumni is very good, and we've got the framework on how it's done. We just need to translate that to our other sports.

How do we connect? How do we pass that knowledge on to others down the road?

I'd love to start seeing a little bit more of an alumni for each and every one of our sports.

Photo credits:

Left top: Nino Aguilar/The Nugget

Left bottom: Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget

2025/26 NAIT Ooks season recap

By Geono Aloisio, Sports Editor

The Ooks' season has come and gone, and there is a lot to unpack over the past eight months. From conference titles to appearances at nationals, it was a busy year. Here's a refresher, breaking down everything that happened for each team.

Badminton

Result: One ACAC gold, three ACAC silvers, one nationals gold, three nationals bronze

It was an amazing comeback year for the badminton program, which won its first Canadian Collegiate Athletics Association (CCAA) national gold since 2022. The program won eight medals in total.

They were also the top team in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC) through the three tournaments before heading to the conference championships.

The team will see one fifth-year graduate, which means most of their roster should be back for next season. If they keep the group together, they should be poised to have another strong showing at nationals.

Cross-country/Indoor track

Result: One ACAC gold, three ACAC silvers

The cross-country team did not come away with any medals at their fall championships, but they found success in the winter. The cross-country program expanded into indoor track for the first time and immediately proved it was the right decision.

Malachi Muir captured gold for NAIT in the men's 300m sprint and 50m sprint, while Brynn Hebert won silver in the women's 600m, 1000m and 1500m. It was a great first year for indoor track competition.

Curling

Result: Men's ACAC gold, men's nationals silver

The men's curling team was the highlight of the curling program in 2025/26. They won their first gold in over a decade, reached the gold medal game at the national stage, and eventually took home silver.

NAIT's women's team finished 0-6 in the regular season, and the mixed team went 3-1 in the regular season. There will be some roster turnover on the men's team, so the team will need to rebound quickly to defend its gold medal next season.

Golf

Result: One ACAC silver, two ACAC bronze

It was another year with medals at the conference level for the golf team. They brought home a silver for the second consecutive year. While they sent six athletes to nationals, the success they saw at conference championships didn't translate to nationals.

The team has competed all three years since the program was restarted, but has not once placed in the top three. The program still has a way to go before they reach that point, but the team might be in contention for an ACAC gold medal next year.



Men's basketball

Record: 13-7, third in the North Division

Playoff result: Fifth in ACAC

The men's team has improved greatly since Adika Peter-McNeilly took over as head coach at the beginning of last season, going from 9-11 in 2023/24 to 14-7 in 2024/25 and a slight step back at 13-7 this season.

However, the Oaks have yet to turn that regular season success into playoff success. The team missed the podium in both of their playoff appearances and has not won a medal at the conference level since their last title in 2015/16.

It was an overall positive year for a team that has turned its record around in a great way. If they retain most of their roster, they should have a good shot at ending that streak.

Women's basketball

Record: 17-3, second in the North Division

Playoff result: Silver medal, nationals appearance

It was the closing of a chapter for the women's team this year. With fifth-year guards Payton Neilson and Mikah Reed playing in their final season of eligibility, it was a chance to end their careers on a high note. And the program did send them off with a silver medal at the conference championships and a trip to Montreal for nationals.

However, it didn't end with a national title as the team may have hoped.

It was still a great season for the women, though. They have steadily improved year over year since going 5-15 the year after they won nationals, and now they have a new task on their hands: find a way to stay competitive next season without Neilson and Reed.

Men's hockey

Record: 12-12, third in ACAC

Playoff result: Lost semi-final series 2-0 to SAIT

The 2025/26 season took the men's team on a rollercoaster of a year. They were 1-9 and sitting in last place at one point this season, before they went 11-3 to finish the regular season in third.

In the semi-finals, NAIT defeated Concordia in the first round after losing to them two years in a row. The Oaks gave SAIT a run for their money and went out fighting.

They have a very young team eligibility-wise, so if they keep the group together, they should take a step forward in 2026/27.

Women's hockey

Record: 14-11, third in ACAC

Playoff result: Lost semi-final series 2-0 to Red Deer

The women's team had some good stretches in their season, but ultimately never found a way to challenge the conference's top teams, Lakeland or Red Deer. The Oaks had chances to win their series against Red Deer, yet costly late-game mistakes



sealed their playoff fate. The team could graduate as many as eight players — four are guaranteed to graduate as fifth-years.

Losing depth might hurt their chances, but the Oaks always seem to find ways to remain competitive and bring in players who can contribute from day one. This team will be a fun one to keep an eye on next year to see how they adapt.

Men's soccer

Record: 8-0-4, second in the North Division

Playoff result: ACAC title, nationals bronze

The men's soccer team was the most successful team at NAIT this season. Adding a conference title and a national bronze to their trophy case capped off one of the most impressive seasons the club has had since it last won an ACAC title in 2018/19.

They only had three players in their fifth year of eligibility and the majority of their team next season should return. The team was among the best in the conference last year and is well-positioned to defend its title in 2026/27.

Women's soccer

Record: 9-2-1, second in the North Division

Playoff result: ACAC silver

The women's soccer team, composed of sixteen players in their first or second year of eligibility, took the Concordia Thunder to penalty kicks in the gold medal game before eventually running out of steam.

It was an impressive feat for a young squad that narrowly missed the playoffs last season, and the future looks bright if they continue to add players

who can make an immediate impact. Expect this team to take another step forward next year.

Men's volleyball

Record: 14-5, second in North Division

Playoff result: Lost nationals bronze semi-finals to VIU Mariners

The men's team knew from day one they were locked into the final weekend of volleyball action this year as hosts of the 2026 national tournament. They had a strong showing through the regular season, and with over 10 players set to potentially leave the program following the year, it was a chance to end their chapter with a win on home court. That ultimately did not happen.

However, the Oaks now have to shift into their new era of volleyball — one that will feature many new players. How the team adapts to losing a significant chunk of its roster will be a major factor in how it performs next season.

Women's volleyball

Record: 13-6, second in the North Division

Playoff result: ACAC bronze medal

The women's team, on the other hand, entered a new chapter of their own. They won their first medal at provincials since winning the title back in 2012/13. They will lose two fifth-years next year, but the team is looking primed for a provincial championship run and maybe even a national title if they retain their roster.

The program has improved year over year, and with a young core, they might just be able to do it. Watch out for this team in 2026/27.

Photo Credits (p.20):

TOP: The men's hockey team during their semifinal match. Photo by Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget; MIDDLE LEFT: Finn Howard celebrates during the first game of nationals. Photo by Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget; BOTTOM LEFT: Jada Lee takes a swing during golf nationals. Photo via CCAA; TOP RIGHT: Ella Dolan during badminton nationals. Photo by Kevin Barrett Photography/CCAA; BOTTOM RIGHT: The men's soccer team during their bronze-medal match at nationals. Photo by Mathias Pacheco Lemina/CCAA

p.21: Julien Phillips jumps during men's volleyball nationals. Photo by Ana Kostyrko/The Nugget

Sustainability spotlight

Change.Toothpaste



Mike Medicoff and his daughter Syd stand outside their Edmonton office.

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 Mike Medicoff, founder of Change.Toothpaste. Medicoff and his family created toothpaste in tablet form, aiming to reduce plastic waste.

Answers have been edited for clarity and space.

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

Mike Medicoff: I was a stay-at-home dad at the time, and Syd, she brought me this advertisement for Bite Toothpaste, which is one of the first to make a tablet, and said "Dad, I think we should bring this in, because there's a problem with the tube."

I said, sure, we'll see what this is all about. It took about 11 weeks to get here, and over the course of a year for a family of four, it was like \$1,400. Sustainability is important, but it can't be a mortgage payment. So, in her wonderful, sustainable mind she's like, "Well, let's make our own."

We did a deep dive into all the ingredients in commercial toothpaste and natural toothpaste, took that to our dentist and said, "This is what we're thinking of doing. What do we need?" Most of this stuff is preservative that keeps the paste from going bad in the tube. We got it down to eight ingredients.

And so, then we were able to form a tablet. The recipe took 119 formulations

to get the one with a really good flavour profile. And that's the one we're still currently using.

NSC: Can you walk us through the life cycle of your tablets?

MM: So, the packaging didn't start out as our compostable pouch. This was a second iteration. We were using craft packaging. We had the tablet and we were looking for a shipping method. Canada Post is a restrictive type of shipping method, but if we put the tablets in a flat pouch, it can go in letter mail, making it less expensive for the customer and fit into their sustainability model. Our pouch looks plastic, it does, but it's more compostable than the craft packaging.

NSC: What's the biggest challenge you faced as a sustainability-focused business?

MM: The supply chain is probably our number one obstacle because of the balancing of buying things that are reasonably priced. When we source out everything, we try local first, and then it's Alberta, then it's Canada, then it's North America, then it's the rest of the world. To be able to balance what our needs are, the cost of it, the footprint to get it back here, all of those things are taken into account.

If I find a local manufacturer of something and I need a pallet of it, they're wrapping the pallet in plastic, or the packaging of it isn't as sustainable as we would like. So then, although they may be in plastic, it's still reducing plastic for the rest of the customers, because it's not everyone who's buying that plastic, we're just buying it in a bigger amount to kind of save everyone, if that makes sense.

NSC: How do you ensure that your supply chain aligns with your values?

MM: A lot of research, a lot of questions. It's that balance of, yes, the pallet comes wrapped in plastic, but is there another way you can wrap the pallet? That's the deep dive,

a lot of research on what we need and who supplies that. You interview each company and say, "What is your standpoint of this, this, this and this?" To be honest, most of them couldn't care less. The biggest problem is there's a couple of websites that talk about their sustainability on an objective view. So we look at those things and it's balancing. Is this a dollar per unit or is this \$20 per unit? If it's \$10, but you're more sustainable, then we'll take a chance there.

NSC: Recently, you released a statement saying that contrary to what you were led to believe, the flosser cakes that you were selling were not fully compostable. So what was the feedback that you received from your customers there?

MM: Surprisingly positive. It was very overwhelmingly supportive and understanding. I was really nervous when we released that because it was heartbreaking when we found out. I hated feeling like we let people, our customers down and especially those who have supported us for so long.

It's really clear how far transparency and communication goes with customers. If you talk about it as soon as it happens, then there's kind of no room to be super upset because we were hoping for the best and we've made the change.

To learn more about Change.Toothpaste and shop their products, visit their website: www.changetoothpaste.mysphopify.com.

Catch up on other Sustainability Spotlight interviews on *Ooks Life*.

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HARD

THE ANSWERS YOU NEED ON THE NUGGET ONLINE.

(if what you need is answers to sudooku)



Comic by Macy Jackson, Freelance Contributor

MAIN CAMPUS OFFICES AND SERVICES



SYMBOLS

- Student Service Centre
- Parking
- Motorcycle Parking
- Bike Lockers
- ETS Station
- Bus Stop
- Pick-up/Drop-off
- DATS Location
- Bike Tune-up Station
- Emergency Meeting Point
- AED
See Main Campus AED and Muster Point Map for detailed locations

LOCATIONS

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

BUILDINGS

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

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	Nísohkamátotán 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	Student Study Lounges	U-210
Health Services	S-105	Reflection Rooms	CAT-406		CAT-200
International and Intercultural Community Centre	W-101	Shop AT NAIT	J-209	Study Commons, CAT	CAT-215
Learning Services	E-105	Student Artisanal Market	L-024	Study Commons, NAITSA	W-203
Library Services	U-310	Student Counselling	X-114		
			O-120		
			W-111PB		