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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Without this new policy, LGBTQ students are not safe in our schools.”

Dr. Jennifer Davis

See **SEXUAL ORIENTATION POLICY** Page 2



April 1, 2016 Vol. 51, Issue 10

Bridging Cultures dances its way through Lethbridge College



PHOTO BY KATELYN WILSON

Roger Hunt Jr. dances in Centre Core during Lethbridge College's Bridging Cultures event last Wednesday. People travelled across the province to participate in the event.



ENDEAVOUR



SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA

Legal drug causes seizures,
irregular heartbeat, panic attacks
and hallucinations.

By Sarah Redekop Page 5



ATM THEFTS

Over 40 locations have been robbed of
their ATMs' in the last six months.

By Aaron Haugen Page 2

EMBRACING CULTURES

Lethbridge College showcased
cultural diversity this week. Check out
lethbridgecampusmedia.ca for more.



Impact of religious diversity

COLE SWIER
@coleswier

With so much religious diversity within Lethbridge one has to wonder the impact that the variety has on the community.

One organization that has been associated with religious diversity within the community is the Lethbridge Islamic Centre.

Zeeshan Ahmed recently moved to Lethbridge from Calgary to become the Imam or religious director of the centre.

Ahmed stressed how the wide assortment of faith in Lethbridge creates a more kind and humble small town atmosphere.

“I think it all promotes this good environment that we have here, this kindness and this affection. We are all human and we have the concerns and the same things we need to do as any other person of any other religion.”

A different, less recognizable, but still prominent faith in Lethbridge would be the Bahá'í community.

The fundamental idea behind Bahá'í is that all religions of the world have come from one God and are in spirit sequential chapters of one religion from God.

Mohsen Seyed Mahmoud is a Bahá'í believer, he emphasized that the ultimate goal of Bahá'í is a world where everyone regardless of faith work together to complete common goals.

“A utopian world is one in which all religions and facets of society recognize each other and work in unison. That is the ultimate goal of the Bahá'í faith.”

All religious beliefs aside, from an educational stand point Hillary Rodrigues teaches religious studies at the University of Lethbridge.

Rodrigues has travelled the world and is the

recipient of the university's Distinguished Teaching Award. He articulated that religious diversity is linked to cultural diversity, so the increase in one aspect of cultural variety is not just connected to Lethbridge, but Canada as a whole.

“With cultural diversity comes religious diversity, because religions are the things that are deeply meaningful to people from different cultures. So

Canada in a way demonstrates that even though religions can divide people, they actually enhance tolerance and we are enriched by discovering something about other people's cultures.”

According to Statistics Canada from 2006-2011 over 2,000 religious immigrants moved to Lethbridge, of those over half identified as Christian.

Alongside Christianity another 200 associate themselves with Hinduism, and just fewer than 200 considered themselves Muslims.

With the population of Alberta growing from an estimated 3.9 million in 2012 to 4.2 million in 2015 one can suspect the amount of diversity within this province we call home will continue to increase.



PHOTO BY COLE SWIER

Zeeshan Ahmed is the Imam of the Lethbridge Islamic Centre.

COME SUPPORT LETHBRIDGE COLLEGE SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND DESIGN STUDENTS AT COLLIDE-O-SCOPE ON APRIL 16 AT 7 P.M.

LGBTQ committee formed for Lethbridge School District No. 51

Sexual orientation policy hopes to protect students

KIERRA SLATER
@kierraslater

More than 1,000 residents showed up to elect four members to a committee that will make recommendations for the board regarding the Lethbridge School District No.51 sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression policy.

The gender expression policy must be implemented into the school district but with an elected committee, members can give their opinions on the draft, which the board can take into consideration.

Dillon Hargreaves was one of a handful of guests invited to greet the crowd and was not in favour of electing a committee. She felt the policy did not need to be changed for a second time.

“We believe that the policy is inclusive, well written and supportive of our students. We felt that there had been more than enough community engagement up to this point and that there had already been enough discussion and dialogue.”

Before election of committee members began, the crowd was first given the option to vote in favour of electing a committee or to vote against it and keep the gender expression policy as is; 534 were in favour and 425 were not, meaning the policy was passed and a committee will be elected.

Hargreaves wanted to show verbal support and be a voice for the LGBTQ community on the committee to create a balance of opinions.

“It is a strong policy that will protect our students so we were hoping to have that voice heard. We worry the committee would be an attempt to weaken the policy. It was mentioned that two of the elected members believe that this policy shouldn't even exist, so it's hard to make recommendations for this policy when those recommendations are to completely remove sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.”

Eight people from the public were nominated and gave speeches to inform voters of their stance on the sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression policy and why they should be elected on the committee.

The four elected committee members are Richard Low, Genevieve Steed, Bill Zwartbol and Laura Scarpelli.

Steed was the creator of the petition that held 2,300 signatures. In Steed's speech for election, she stated that she believed all students deserve to feel safe and protected, not just one group of students.

“I currently believe that there is no need for a stand-alone policy regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Singling out one minority sends a message that the needs of that minority supersede the needs of other minorities and the needs of the majority. It creates a damaging segregation.”

As a member of the committee, the board will hear Steed's voice and recommendations when it comes to drafting a new policy.

Most of the attendees of the public meeting came in knowing how they stood on



PHOTO BY KIERRA SLATER

Lethbridge residents hold up green and red cards to present their decision during the meeting to determine if a committee will be elected.

the matter. Although some people weren't sure of the choice they would make, it was apparent that there were two very opposing sides in the crowd.

Dr. Jennifer Davis is a firm believer in the policy as it is written and says this policy addresses the specific needs of children who are members of gender and sexuality minorities and that they do need special protection.

“District 51 has recognized the unique vulnerabilities of these students, just as they've already recognized the unique vulnerabilities of ESL students in policy 605.3, FMNI students in policy 602.4 and students in need of learning support in policy 605 to name only a few. Without this new policy, LGBTQ students are not safe in our schools.”

Davis said research done out of the University of British Columbia shows when schools create policies specifically aimed at reducing the rates of LGBTQ students, it's just these students who benefit; perceptions of being safe goes up for all students.

With four committee members, Lethbridge School District No.51 will get to work to draft a new policy on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression which is expected later this year.

Supporters of the policy as it is currently written are encouraging fellow supporters to make their voice heard.

Residents fear increase in crime rate around Lethbridge

TAWNIA PLAIN EAGLE
@tawnia_pe

According to Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) drug trafficking may be the reason crime is rising in Lethbridge.

One Lethbridge man (who wishes to remain anonymous) says he doesn't feel safe in the city anymore since he was a victim to a crime three months ago.

He expresses that the city is not the peaceful city it used to be years before.

“I hate living here and I can't wait to move,” he said.

Colin Catonio, Deputy Chief for the LPS says in the last year alone there have been three murder cases that resulted in six crime-related deaths.

The majority of those deaths were results of domestic violence and drug-related situations.

“The reason for the murder might be from a settlement from debt, or a drug transaction,” Catonio said.

He adds that sometimes these deaths can be related to simple situations such as stealing the other persons girlfriend or boyfriend.

Hayley, (who wishes not to publish her last name) has just moved to Lethbridge in the last year.

Living on the north side, she says she feels like she is living in an area that is safe for her and her daughter.

“For the most part, I find that the violence and assaults are towards particular people,” says Hayley.

Judging the city's crime rates by what she hears in

the news, she says there is not a lot of random acts of violence.

She says that as long as she lives in a safe neighbourhood, she feels like she doesn't have a lot to worry about.

A lot like Hayley, Catonio says there is no risk to the public's safety.

With the population growing, cities like Calgary and Edmonton are dissolving organized crime groups.

Catonio says they look to smaller cities like Lethbridge to develop markets.

“Lethbridge is a good sized city, with 100,000 people, it represents a good market,” Catonio says.

He says that crime has gone up all across the country, but Lethbridge is not immune to crime like other cities.

ATM thefts becoming frequent in southern Alberta

AARON HAUGEN
@ahaugie

A recent spike in attempts to steal ATMs from businesses and financial institutions across Alberta has got police looking for answers.

Over 40 locations have been robbed of their ATMs over the last six months, with targets varying from gas stations to rec centres.

RCMP Sgt. Jack Poitras of K Division media relations said that there is no specific pattern to the crimes.

“We've had communities such as Viking, Grand Prairie and Fort Saskatchewan hit,” Poitras said. “The only thing they have in common is that they have an

ATM.”

He went on to add that the thieves now appear to be going through walls to get at machines that are more secured.

Dave Maze, an instructor in the School of Justice Studies at Lethbridge College and a veteran of the Lethbridge Police Service, said that a successful robbery could net a tidy sum.

“Thieves can net any were from \$10,000 upwards to 40 or 50 thousand depending on the location,” he said.

Maze added that as this type of robbery is nothing new. Preventative methods have existed for a while, such as the installation of crash barriers to prevent people from driving through the front of buildings.

“The use of tractors and other heavy equipment is a

new twist,” he added.

Glenn Kubish with ATB Financial, one of the largest providers of financial services in rural Alberta, said company policy is to not discuss the security of branches with the public.

“The spike in numbers is not something we talk about publically,” he said. “The criminal investigations belong to the police.”

Poitras added that the crime spree is leading businesses to second guess having ATMs in their establishments.

“These businesses are facing tens of thousands of dollars in costs to repair walls and doors from these crimes over an ATM they don't own and doesn't generate that much profit from them,” he said.

New LGBTQ policy causes some to question Mormon faith

BY HALEN KOOPER
@koop_kulture

Mormons in the LGBTQ community feel alienated after new rules in the LDS handbook ask their children to condemn the relationship.

In November the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints added a policy to the LDS handbook regarding same-sex relationship couples and their families.

The policy states children of same-sex couples cannot be baptized until the age of 18 and will only be baptized once they condemn the relationships of their parents to the church.

These positions by the church confused and deeply upset many, who feel the preachings of the faith are contradictory, especially Mormon Kim Siever.

"The Mormon Church has taken a socially conservative stance. As a result, they've dismissed the community. To me, it would seem they should want to embrace the LGBTQ community who are interested in the faith," Siever said.

With a daughter who no longer practices LDS faith and is part of the LGBTQ community, Siever fears the relationship he could have with his grandchildren is in jeopardy.

"She doesn't participate in the church anymore, but there was always that potential. If that were the case, then that would affect our religious relationship with our grandchildren. They wouldn't be able to participate in the sacraments of the LDS church," said Siever.

Although leaving the faith before the new policy, Siever's daughter was deeply affected by it.

"She identifies as atheist and has for several months prior to the policy coming out, but the policy has made her quite upset. The way she's been treated in the church, and not because of her sexuality, she felt excluded and this perpetuates this feeling," said Siever.

The church's new statements on same-sex couples shook Siever to his core emotionally and had him question his own faith as well.

"It really affected me in a profound way. I was really torn up by [the policy]. The night it happened, seeing some of the things members of LDS were saying made me sick inside, it made me nauseous. I was struggling mentally and emotionally," said Siever.

"I was having a faith crisis and debating whether to stay or go. Some people were supportive whether I decided to stay or not, but some were silent. It was

as if they hadn't paid attention to anything I had been saying."

Siever has been a supporter of same-sex and marriage equality since it became legal in Canada 10 years ago, but seeing the influence the church can have on the LGBTQ community, he decided he needed to do more to show his support.

"Since that point people have viewed me differently, but I have become more radical in other beliefs and they might be dismissing me."

Given the length of time marriage equality has been a part of Canada, Siever sees the recent addition of the policy as a political statement after the U.S. Supreme Court decision last year.

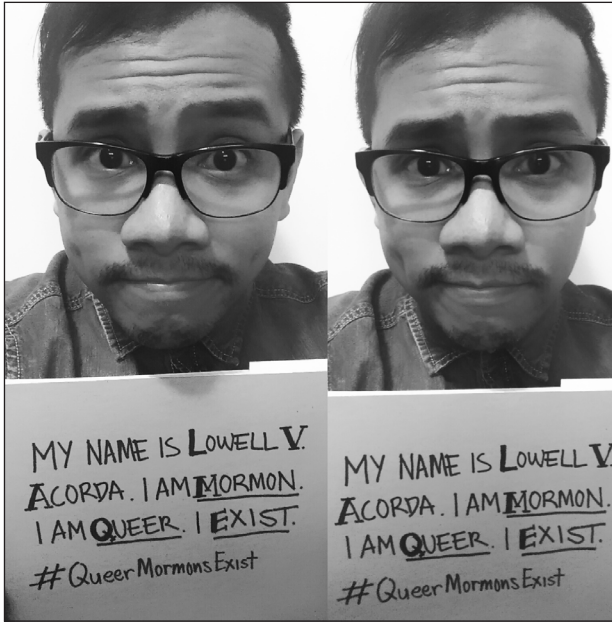


PHOTO BY LOWELL ACORDA

Acorda looks for acceptance from Mormon church.

"It wasn't an issue until it was mandated within the United States and now it's political. Despite the fact more than half the Mormon population lives outside of the United States," said Siever.

Siever couldn't understand the policy and how parents providing a secure environment for their children and family could be seen as living in sin.

"Someone who is convicted of murder isn't considered apostate, but someone who lives in a loving relationship and provides a stable home for children is considered apostate. It doesn't make any sense," said Siever.

Claiming they wrote the policy out of love for the parent/child relationship and family bonds, the message the church was sending confused LGBTQ Mormon Lowell Acorda.

How forgiveness can be granted to almost anyone and the hypocrisy of the church, was a view both LGBTQ Mormon Lowell Acorda and Siever shared.

"I would call out those who say it was a policy done in love. People who abuse their spouse or their children aren't being condemned like the people who are homosexual and searching for a wholesome relationship," said Acorda.

The LDS church's firm stance on LGBTQ's and their participation in Mormonism, to Acorda, has contaminated a moment for the church to show love and tolerance to everyone who wishes to practice the faith.

"What someone would typically take as a moment of education is tainted with personal opinions," said Acorda. "They've gone as far as to say we don't exist. To say there are no homosexuals in this church, for an apostle to discredit your existence really hits you below the belt."

Why the LDS church waited until the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling to draft a policy was lost on Acorda, but he attributes it to America's relationship with the religion itself.

"Why did this happen when the church was only affected in the United States? It hasn't affected the congregations in Canada or Europe. The LDS church is very America centric. The culture has strong American traditions," said Acorda.

Worried about what the future holds, should Acorda choose to raise his own family within the church's community, he fears one day the church will come knocking on his door carrying torches and pitchforks.

"To have this hope that I had to be somehow involved with the church, even if I still had my partner and future family has dissolved. It was really heart breaking. I see myself as a member of good standing until I pursue a relationship, in which case it'll turn into a witch hunt," Acorda said.

Even though Acorda worries about his future position in the church, the mindset it instills into its members has been affecting his family life for a long time.

"I understand their involvement in my life might discredit them and I fear a rift will be created within my family. We have a don't ask, don't tell policy," said Acorda.

For now Siever and Acorda continue to practice their faith the way they see fit, waiting for the day the LDS church passes their final judgment upon them.

Local media and police keep communication lines open

BY COLE SWIER
@coleswier

Behind every news story, whether it's a missing person report or a car crash on Whoop Up Drive, it is the behind the scenes relationship at work the audience may never notice. The partnership between the media and local policing authorities is rarely on the minds of the viewer and listeners.

In Lethbridge with numerous radio, television, and print outlets available, the relationship between police and media can be difficult to juggle. Kristen Harding is an executive officer in charge of media contacts at Lethbridge Police Services. Harding feels communication between all the entities is essential in getting a message to the public. She stressed the importance of seeing the media as a partner to release information, instead of a threat.

"Whether it's trying to locate a missing person or aiding in an investigation, we really rely on them as an avenue to get information out to the public."

On the other side of the coin, Ryan Mennie is the Afternoon drive host for CJOC in Lethbridge. Despite his lack of contact with the authorities as an on-air entertainer, he understands the importance of the relationship from a newsroom perspective.



PHOTO BY COLE SWIER

CJOC host Ryan Mennie broadcasting live.

"We (CJOC) are always in contact with them for events that have happened in the city or crimes that are being investigated so we can let the public know what's going on."

No matter the medium or relationship between the media and authorities, it is vital for any community. Harding stressed that in her opinion communication is a two-way street and neither the police nor media in Lethbridge need to compromise the integrity of either outlet to get information out to the public.

"I think it goes both ways. I think there needs to be an understanding that we both have a job to do and meet somewhere in the middle. I think that we're

doing that."

Whether it's as simple as an update on an ongoing investigation, or questions regarding policing policy, the bond between the two entities must remain strong to add to the sense of community in Lethbridge.

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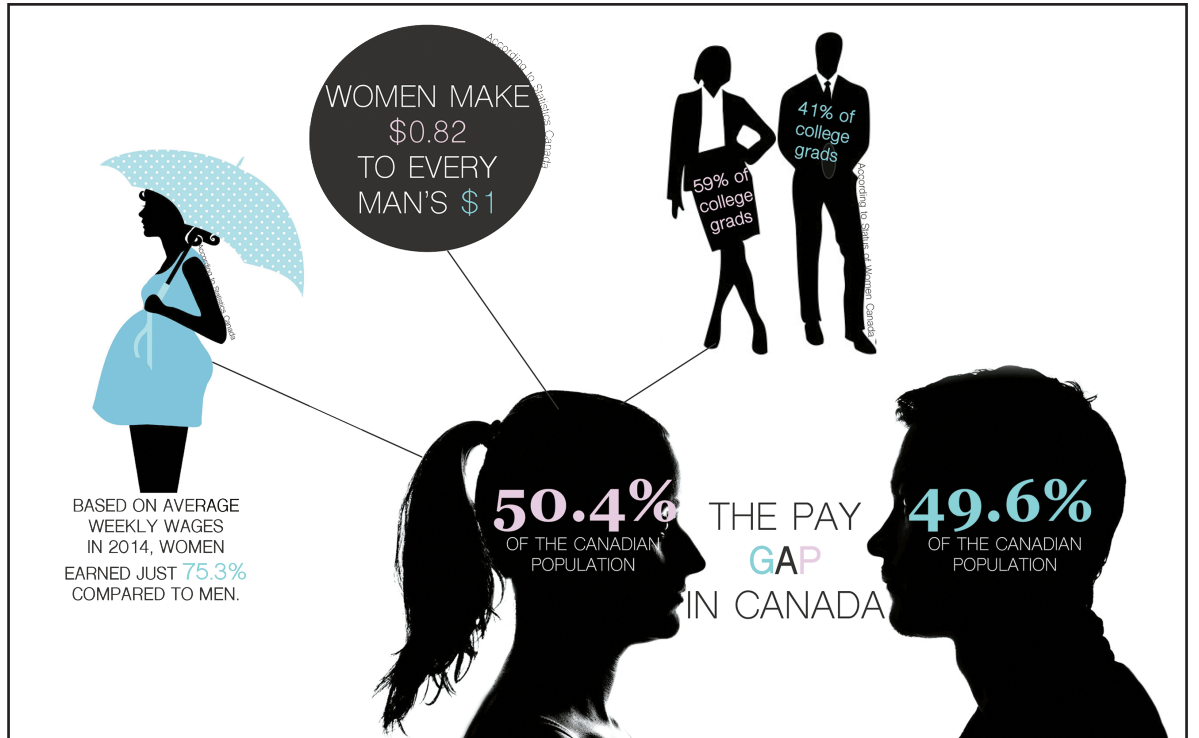
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Infographic by Kierra Slater

According to RBC economists, the Canadian economy has seen \$130 billion added by the female labour force in the past three decades. Canada ranked 19th in the most recent World Economic Forum in regards to the average size of gender wage gaps.

School's out forever?

LILLI GEAN LAMENTS



MEAGAN WILLIAMS

With convocation just weeks away, many students will say goodbye to their post-secondary careers and hello to the real world.

Some will move into the job market with glee, others will drag their feet unwillingly.

Having had a career prior to making the move back to formal education, I can gladly say I am excited to earn a decent paycheque again and have some regular routine in my life.

While I am inside the four walls of the college from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., I look forward to having free time that isn't spoiled by the prospect of assignments and projects hanging over my head.

Down time can be filled with whatever I like and not running around to make sure I write that assignment, take that photograph or record that interview.

While I look forward to crossing the stage on April 22.

On the other hand I will miss a number of things about full-time studies.

My instructors who have more patience and passion than I think I could muster for even the most interesting of subjects, my classmates who have provided so many hilarious moments of much needed comedic relief and the countless lessons and skills I've learned along the way.

"School will fly," they said.

"Two years will go by in the blink of an eye." I didn't believe them, the thought of two years with little income and scholastic stresses was a daunting adventure to take.

As in many situations "they" were right. I feel like completing my diploma has flown by, it truly has.

So as my final column for this publication I'd like to leave just a few words of wisdom for those who come next.

Appreciate it, embrace it and say yes to it all.

You will figure out a way to manage the assignments and the stress, but do it with eyes wide open and appreciate every moment that is presented to you.

It's unlikely you'll see these opportunities again.

Perils of a cashless society

AARON HAUGEN
@ahaugie

"Royal Dominion Bank of Canada customer service, how may I help you this evening?"

"Yeah, uh hi. Your ATM ate my debit card."

"That's unfortunate, where and when did this happen?"

"About 20 minutes ago at your branch in west Lethbridge."

"Okay then. Can I get your card number please?"

"It's on the bank card currently in the ATM."

"Oh right! Well, can I get the address that's listed on the account, then? Okay great! And can I get the birthday listed on the account? Awesome! Okay, so it looks

like the transaction you attempted was cancelled ... 60 dollars was it?"

"Yeah that's right. "Um ... is there any way you could get the machine to uncanceled that transaction? I kinda need that 60 bucks right now."

"Unfortunately I can't do that, but what I can do is lock your card so that it can't be used until you get a new one."

"So what are my options?"

"Well, you can go get a new card when the branch opens tomorrow, or I can issue a new card on that same number and it'll get to you in about 10 business days."

"Uh ... I'm probably just going to go with getting a new card tomorrow morning."

"Okay. I'm sorry this happened to you tonight. Now I just need a little more information to log this for our records. Can I get your bank card number please?"

The chemical imbalance of synthetic marijuana

SARAH REDEKOP
@sleered

There's a dangerous drug on the streets; it's legal and easy to obtain. Known as K2, Spice, and incense aromas- synthetic marijuana can be purchased at most paraphernalia shops in Canada. The substance is made up of chemicals designed to mimic the effects of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is the main psychoactive ingredient in cannabis. According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, synthetic marijuana has been associated with seizures, irregular heartbeat, panic attacks, agitation, hallucinations and a few cases resulting in death. In the US in 2011, 11,406 emergency room visits were reported in connection with synthetic cannabinoid use.

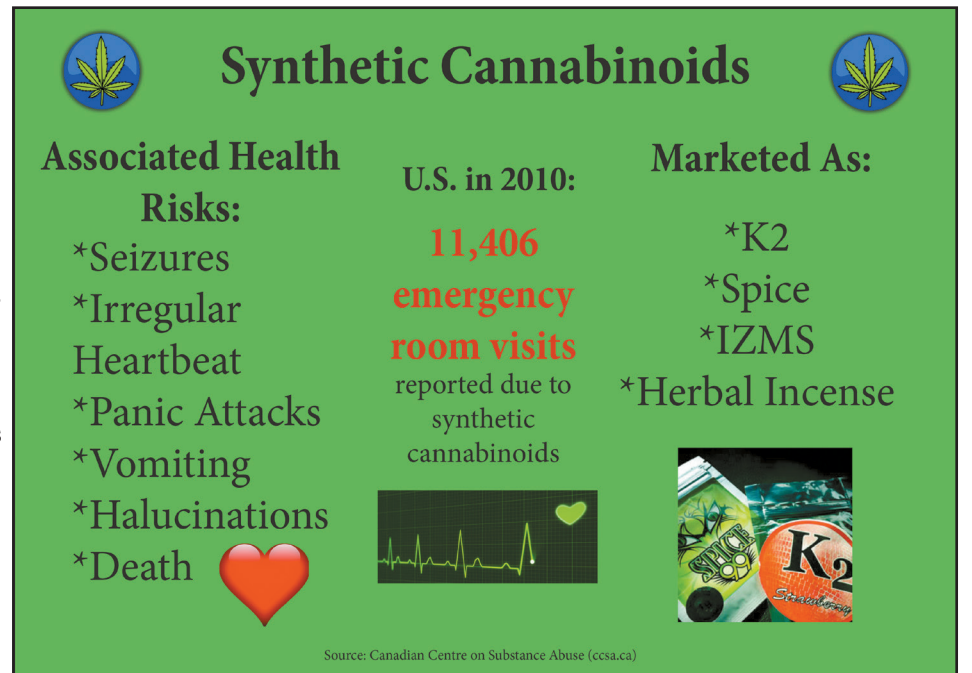
One man, who told Lethbridge Campus Media he did not want to be identified, tried synthetic marijuana at a party. "I had been drinking a bit and one of the people at the party had some, so I figured I would try it," he said. He explains how he was curious to find out what it was like. He explains that he has smoked natural marijuana before and always enjoyed it. He did not have the same experience with the synthetic drug. "I went from having a great night with some friends to feeling absolutely nauseous, paranoid and uncomfortable," he said. "I had to stop hanging out with my friends and go

to bed." He says he will never do it again because the experience was so bad. "It's hard to believe something like that is legal, yet natural marijuana is not. It boggles my mind," he said.

It is difficult for officials to regulate synthetic marijuana because the chemicals in them are continually altered. When one chemical is deemed illegal, it is replaced with another chemical that has not been banned. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "manufacturers try to sidestep these laws by changing the chemical formulas in their mixtures." NIDA also states that because the substance cannot be regulated, chemical compounds can change from batch to batch resulting in unpredictable effects.

Because the substances contained in this drug are not illegal, law enforcement has a difficult time taking it off the streets. Lethbridge RCMP officer, CPL Bryan Mucha, has 20 years of service and explains synthetic marijuana is not something for them that's easy to identify. "From a street perspective, I've never come across anything like that we would have seized or knew that it was synthetic marijuana," he said. Due to the fact that it is not a controlled substance, he says it is difficult to monitor. "It's one of those things that lands in a grey area," said Mucha.

For more information about the dangers of synthetic marijuana or synthetic drugs, visit drugabuse.org.



INFOGRAPHIC BY SARAH REDEKOP

The various associated health risks and street names of synthetic marijuana.

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Plans to revamp Spitz Stadium

KATELYN WILSON
@katewils14

Baseball, it's a sport that's been played right here in our city for over 100 years and one of the city's historic facilities that host the great sport is receiving a facelift.

According to local historian Belinda Crowson, legend has it that the first baseball game in Lethbridge was played on Christmas day in 1885.

"The men had the day off and that was a really warm Christmas so they went out to the square, which is now Galt Gardens and they had a game there. Pretty soon clubs were created in Lethbridge."

And for the past 30 years Spitz Stadium has been Lethbridge's premier baseball facility.

But with an aging infrastructure, Mayor Chris Spearman said the city has decided to give the stadium a much needed upgrade.

"We recognize the need to update the stadium and what we are doing is assessing what needs to be done versus what would like to be done and we are addressing the needs first of all," said Spearman.

The \$2.9 million project will include upgraded washrooms, a new ticket area, expanded press box and first aid room.

But the list of upgrades originally included a full upper concourse and the addition of a VIP suite.

Something, Kevin Kvame President of the Spitz

Stadium Society and Lethbridge Bulls, said had to be scaled back due to financing.

"Renovations were actually approved three years ago and we tendered them out to contractors and the tenders came in quite a bit over," said Kvame.

Kvame also said after the first phase of renovations are complete, they will review the situation and seek additional funding.

Spitz Stadium was built in 1975 and was originally named Henderson Stadium after William Henderson, the only mayor to have died while in office. The name was later changed to Spitz Stadium by the city in 2008.

According to Crowson, Henderson was working on the project at the time and when he died his name was attached to the stadium and entire area around it.

Crowson also pointed out that baseball at Spitz Stadium has a unique history and one that existed long before 1975.

In fact, in 1907 Lethbridge joined the newly formed Western Canadian Baseball League. Around the same time the Lethbridge Minors were the popular team in the city.

"In 1924 they did a fundraiser to put up the first grandstand here. Incredibly the fundraising was only \$1,200. That was to put in a fence, the stands and to make the field better," said Crowson.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY GALT MUSEUM

The Miners first games of the weekend on Aug. 13, 1969 against Clive followed by Edmonton at Henderson Stadium. From left, Robin Ondrik, Gerry Veres and Corn Burr were part of the Alberta junior baseball playoffs.

Crowson added that Lethbridge once had a few pioneer league teams including the Lethbridge Expos, Lethbridge Dodgers and Lethbridge Black Diamonds.

Today the stadium is home to the Lethbridge Bulls Baseball Club, a member of the Western Major Baseball League. Kvame said once complete, the plan is to hold more frequent and larger outdoor events.

"We had probably close to 50,000 people here last year with all of the events and games and you do want to showcase your facilities in the city, whether its sports facilities or cultural facilities."

The entire project is set to be complete by 2018-2019. But Kvame says the public will see substantial improvements over the next year.

"It's long overdue for the city and we are really excited to finally get some shovels in the ground in the near future and get this moving," said Kvame.

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Answering the “Big Bang” question

SARAH REDEKOP
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Where did the universe come from? Where did we come from? Where will we all go? Always asking and trying to answer the big questions is how one local professor has spent his life. Saurya Das, PhD, is a theoretical physicist, a professor and researcher at the University of Lethbridge. Last year he collaborated on and published a journal with Ahmed Farag Ali titled, *Physics Letters B*, indicating the universe had no beginning and has no end. The proofs worked out in this document imply that the universe did not begin at a single point followed by what is known as the “Big Bang,” when space and time rushed outwards creating the universe.

Das explains that quantum mechanics does not allow for a singularity- a point in time where the universe was infinitely hot and dense. “When things get really small, there will be this quantum jittering or fluctuations which prevent it from forming a singularity,” said Das. He explains that you can’t squish everything down to a point, that quantum mechanics would prevent that from happening.

Since last year, Das and his team have continued to try and work out a more detailed model with their equations. He uses what is known about dark matter and dark energy and incorporates those properties into their model. He and his collaborators have also proposed that a hypothetical particle called a graviton is ubiquitous throughout the universe. Using this information they have found that the critical temperature to form this particle is higher than the age of the universe. This information coincides with their model eliminating the singularity.

Das thoroughly enjoys what he does. He explains that he has always had an inclination to answer the

fundamental questions of existence although he understands that the rewards don’t always come quickly. “The way research works, in a lucky year, maybe you get one, just one interesting answer. But that’s fine because the work itself is a lot of fun,” he said. He chuckles as he remarks that he is a painter of paradise with his equations. “You don’t accept anything at face value,” he chuckles again. He explains how he can work out the theories through the math, yet the experiments still need to be carried out to ensure the math works. Das hopes experimentalists will find interest in what he is doing. Some research groups around the world are gaining interest in some of his proposals.

Over the next five years, Das is planning to continue his research in three main areas. This includes verifying that his current model predicts the observations of dark matter and energy, continued research in black hole physics and quantum gravity phenomenology. Das explains how as a physicist you have to take everything in stride. He says he will be really happy if his current model predicts the observations of dark matter. “Even if it doesn’t, that’s fine too. That’s physics. That’s science. You test your theories and you have to accept whatever the results are,” he said.

Das is hopeful the nature of dark matter and dark energy will be discovered in the next five years and he believes it will be. “There is no proof of what it is,” he said. The research he is working on, predicts that it’s



PHOTO BY SARAH REDEKOP

Saurya Das works on some equations in his office at the university.

possible that quantum matter itself is dark energy.

Das refers to physicists as “curious animals” as he describes the study of physics: “It tries to address some of the most fundamental questions that human beings can ask. These questions are simple, it’s just that the answers aren’t that simple to arrive at.”

Das says questions at all levels are important and useful. However, when it comes to answering the most fundamental questions he says, “there should be a subset of physicists who should dedicate themselves to this, that’s how it has always worked,” he said.

Throughout the course of Das’ career he has published over 80 journal publications. Prior to coming to the U of L he conducted his post-doctoral research at Pennsylvania State, the University of Winnipeg and the University of New Brunswick. Das has received numerous awards for his research including a best PhD thesis award as well as various honourable mentions in the Gravity Research Foundation Essay Competitions.

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SPORTS

Fitness motivation

PHOTO AND STORY BY MEAGAN WILLIAMS
@meagan_wms

On a quiet Monday morning, the sounds of weights clinking, heavy breathing and loud bursts of laughter can be heard coming from one family who loves nothing more than to work up a sweat in the gym.

If you would've asked Amber Siemens, a business management student from the University of Lethbridge, if this is how she loves spending her free time a few years ago, you likely would have been given a very different answer. Siemens started on a fitness

journey in 2011 after she developed aches and pains from working as a server. Stepping on the scales at home, Siemens was given a hard wake up call when the number that appeared at her feet was far larger than what she wanted to see.

"I weighed 200 pounds and I was not OK with that. My body was sore all of the time and I knew I needed a change," said Siemens. According to Statistics Canada, in 2014, 20.2 per cent of Canadians aged 18 and older, roughly 5.3 million adults, reported height and weight that classified them as obese. A statistic that Siemens says she no longer wanted to be a part of.

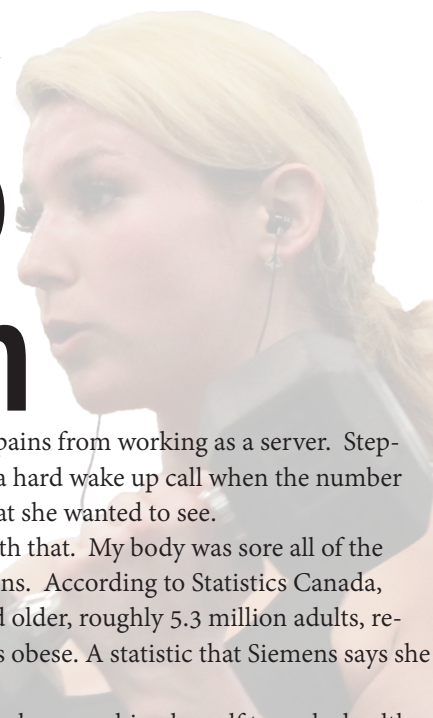
Since that moment, the accounting major has been pushing herself to make healthier life decisions along with inspiring those closest to her. Siemens' brother Mitchell has witnessed his sister's progression and says it's motivated him to think more about how he treats his body.

"When she first started this, she had a lot of work in front of her but she kept going and now to look at her and see where she is, it's definitely inspirational," says Mitchell. Siemens' father Greg has also joined his children working out regularly at the gym. Siemens says her father has helped her in so many ways, from gifting personal training sessions to being there to listen. His encouragement is part of what keeps her going.

In September of 2015, Siemens enlisted the help of Ashlyn Merriman, owner and nutritionist of #PerfectFit4U, that designs menu plans and training schedule for its clients. She says one of the common misconceptions people have about diet and exercise is that you need to eat less and exercise more.

"A lot of people come to me and end up eating more and perhaps not exercising less, but exercising smarter. So if you can think ahead and plan your week in a systematic fashion, you may end up finding that you eat much more than you were originally and losing weight," says Merriman.

Five years later, Siemens is down to 150 pounds and is the fittest she's ever been. "Sometimes you still look at yourself as heavier, and at first it was hard to take a compliment, but then you just have to say, yes, I worked hard and you need to embrace that. I had no self esteem four years ago, I had nothing and now I feel so much stronger mentally, physically, emotionally, all of the above," says Siemens.



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