

## United Church Ministers want to Unionize?

I found myself wondering “why?” And then, “well, why not?” Apparently, too many of Canada’s 4000 United Church Ministers face harassment, public humiliation, slander and even stalking. They have had pay withheld and contracts reneged, and they are frustrated by the lack of support from the church officials who are supposed to investigate these issues. Add to these insults low wages and it is no wonder that 1 in 5 ministers is on stress leave and 160 United Churches are unable to find someone to stand behind the pulpit. So, clergy face the same issues and challenges as other working people. If it seems odd that a union—the CAW nonetheless—will be representing them, then what do people think the role of a union is? As we are caught up in a seemingly endless round of bargaining, now may be a good time to address some common misconceptions about unions and faculty associations.

### **Myth: Unions are coercive; they force people to join and pay dues.**

A union is formed when the majority of workers voluntarily agree to sign union membership cards. You are not required to be a member of the SCFA but it is true, you must pay dues (see 3.1 of our collective agreement). This is because non-members still enjoy the benefits and victories won by the union. If the union wins a wage increase or secures an improvement in conditions, it applies to every worker, not only those who are members.

### **Myth: Unions protect the lazy...the people who should be fired.**

No agreement that a union negotiates can require an employer to keep a worker who is incompetent or lazy. Unions can ensure that dismissals are done for just cause only and not because of irrelevant personality clashes between a worker and his or her employer. But it’s true; unions do protect people’s jobs, especially people who are vulnerable to discrimination based on age, gender, race, disability or sexual orientation.

### **Myth: I don’t need a union because I’m not afraid of being accountable.**

At Selkirk, faculty are held accountable through evaluations and performance appraisals (see 8.7 of our collective agreement). It is a condition of employment that faculty stay current in their field. The SCFA is involved in the evaluation process to ensure fairness and advocates for PD funds and leaves that enable faculty to remain competent and competitive.

### **Myth: Unions are strike happy.**

The fact is most collective agreements are negotiated without a strike. But strikes are controversial and controversy is what makes the news. This may be why people think strikes are the rule rather than the exception. Your SCFA Executive cannot decide to strike. That decision is up to the membership and presumably, workers will not vote to strike unless the issues involved are so important they are worth the sacrifice and hardship.

### **Myth: Unions create an adversarial relationship between faculty and administrators.**

The SCFA negotiates for agreements, not disagreements. The Association ensures that faculty and staff can work with managers backed by a legally enforceable contract that guarantees their rights. It does not destroy collegiality; it sets the rules that make collegiality possible. If you think Selkirk is a great place to work, this is because the Association has lobbied for, and management has agreed to, the clauses in our collective agreement. No other college in the system, for example, has annualization provisions.

### **Myth: The union doesn’t care about students.**

If providing a top-notch educational experience for students is your number one priority, then presumably you want to be empowered to make decisions and act on issues that affect the students in your classroom. The truth is, unions provide staff and faculty with influence and a voice to advocate for quality education. Remember, your working conditions are directly and indirectly tied to the students’ learning conditions.--*Tracy Punchard*

## Movers & Shakers for 2004/05

### Your SCFA Executive:

President / Tracy Punchard  
VP Contract Administration / Monica Vogler  
VP Negotiations / Bev Onischak

Secretary / Judy Deon  
Treasurer / John Stegman  
College Board Rep / Pat Gibson  
Chair, Retirement Issues / Ross Bates

Bargaining / Bev Onischak

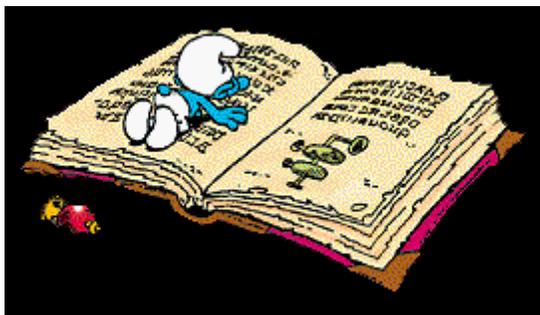
### Reps to FPSE Committees:

Presidents' Council / Tracy Punchard  
Contract Admin / Monica Vogler

Human Rights / Liz Ball  
Occupational Health and Safety / Rob Macrae  
Professional Development / Rita Williams  
Pension Advisory / Ross Bates  
Status of Non-Reg' Faculty / Rebecca Lachance  
Status of Women / Janet Mayr and Paris

## SNRF World

But seriously folks....



Thanks to John Rowell, Rob McRae and Tracy Punchard's kind contribution of their time, this year's Fair Employment Week (October 25-29) was a success. We were able raise awareness about the status and existence of non-regulars (both here and in academia in general) among faculty, staff, the community and students alike.

In case you didn't get the news at that time, here are just a few facts:

- there are *approximately* 30 non-regular faculty members currently employed here at Selkirk - this represents about 36 percent of the

total faculty.

- in order for a non-regular faculty member to be regularized, they must teach four consecutive semesters (excluding summers).
- non-regulars do not have job security, nor can they predict where they will work (or even *if* they will work) or live from one year to the next.
- non-regulars' BC Medical coverage is pro-rated according to their contract; in other words, if the instructor's contract is at 50% of a full load, the college pays 50% of their medical coverage.
- non-regulars do not receive extended health coverage, such as dental or eyecare.

At the SCFA General Meeting, held on November 12th, 2004, it was suggested that benefits for non-regulars become a priority at bargaining. Keep an eye on the SCFA intranet for details and debates.

--Rebecca Lachance



## Meet the New Stewards

Be it by parthenogenesis or budding, VP Contract Administrator Monica Vogler is proud to announce that she now has a number of little Monicas around the college, all in the name of advocacy. For those disenfranchised, the downtrodden, or those feeling the pressure from “the man”, your union has created a number of steward positions as a first line of inquiry for all union matters. Please feel free to contact your School representative with any questions or concerns that you may have. *–Lui Marinelli*

### Shannon Shah

School of Health and Human Services

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Hi my name is Shannon. I work as a Registered Nurse and a Nursing Instructor. I have had the opportunity to work and teach in facilities that participated in collective negotiation and those that did not. Although I have been a union member in the past, this is my first opportunity to be an active participant. My goal is to become familiar with the agreement and to be able to offer support to my colleagues. I welcome all questions, thoughts and concerns that may arise. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Shannon

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Castlegar campus

### Paris Voykin

Non-instructional staff

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I have worked at Selkirk College for 6 years, first as the coordinator of Parent Support Services and now as the Assessment and Invigilation person. I believe that people need and deserve support personally and professionally and for this reason I have volunteered to be a steward for SCFA faculty assistants. Sometimes just talking about an issue with someone who listens well can be the best kind of support. It is my hope to meet all the SCFA non-instructional staff individually. I am

honoured to hold this position and hope to fulfill my duties with commitment and joy.

Paris Voykin

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### Stephen Seaborn

School of University Arts and Sciences

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My name is Stephen and I am the new steward for SCFA members working in the School of University Arts and Sciences. My paid position at the college is Faculty Assistant – Biology. I am responsible for preparing laboratories for biology courses taught by the school.

This is also my third year as a member of the college’s Education Council. Serving you as a steward arises from a desire that individually we are each treated fairly and consistently by our employer. Please contact me with any questions you have regarding our collective agreements or the terms of your individual contracts.

Stephen Seaborn,

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Castlegar campus

School of Business and Aviation

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Currently we **don't** have a representative in the School of Business and Aviation, but certainly would love to have one. If you are interested in joining this vibrant and exciting team in their epic journey in the name of all that is moral and right against the hoards of oppressors...or just want to come out for the great snacks, please contact Monica ([mvogler@selkirk.ca](mailto:mvogler@selkirk.ca)).

approach. If I can be of any assistance to anyone, please feel free to track me down on the Tenth Street Campus, or send me email

Daryl  
P 211 / 352 6601 ext 394 / ([djolly@selkirk.ca](mailto:djolly@selkirk.ca)) / Tenth St. Campus

### **Lui Marinelli**

School of Renewable Resources

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I have been in Renewable Resources for 5 years now and as of last year have begun to teach in the School of University Arts and Sciences. In past employment and here at Selkirk College, I have always been a silent union member, paying my dues and assuming that "it" would all work out fine. But, as they say, you are either a part of the solution or a part of the problem. Now I feel like it is time to come out of the shadows (how mysterious!!) and have my voice heard. I hope that in this position, I can help others in having their voices heard. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Lui

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### **Daryl Jolly**

School of Digital Media, Music, and Information Technology

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Normally, I can write and have an opinion on just about anything - except myself. So... let's see where this goes. I'm a very tall 5'11" and I use this impressive stature for such stewardly activities as attending meetings and nodding when people are telling me something important.

The most significant reason I put my name forward to become a steward was I wanted to meet other faculty and staff outside my own School and campus. Second, I have a very idealistic (some call naive) perspective on human relations and problem solving. I believe that we at Selkirk College are all working for the same ends, and there is validity in all well intended perspectives, experiences, and ideologies. I try to bring this perspective into the classroom and I expect that those who elected me to this post would welcome this

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## Gossip for the lunch table

Looking for new topics of conversation? Here's what's happening in the post-secondary scene:

**At Capilano College,** administration sent a notice telling faculty they were not allowed to penalize students who **missed class to attend a protest** against the war in Iraq. What do you think: should colleges accommodate students' rights to protest during class time?

**At UC of the Fraser Valley,** a student group called Genocide Awareness Project (G.A.P.) has asked for permission to put up displays in the middle of the campus featuring 8'x10' posters of holocaust victims and aborted fetuses. Some faculty and staff consider them to be a **form of harassment**, and are asking if they have to attend campus and be subject to these offensive pictures. The resolution is to have the display behind barriers so that people can "choose" whether or not view the images. A whole mess of conflicting rights and interests collide on this issue. How should it be handled?

**At the College of New Caledonia,** the president refers to students as "**clients**". Does that mean faculty are service providers? How do these terms alter your sense of what you do and your relationship to students?

**It seems the student body is changing once again.** Many faculty, particularly those in ABE, have noticed a sharp decline in the number of students who are single mothers or adults in need of retraining and upgrading. Does this reflect an innocent change in demographics or are these students falling through the cracks because of cutbacks and increases in tuition?

At UC of the Fraser Valley, **the first man** has taken parental leave. He was the head of security. To put this in context, I think half the men at Selkirk were on parental leave last year ☺. We do things differently here, don't we?

**A feel-goody:** According to a report on the first ever Canadian Association of University Teachers **Occupational Health & Safety** Conference, **FPSE** is way ahead of universities in terms of grappling with OH&S issues.

**A feel-baddy:** At UC of the Fraser Valley, the employer has not increased the number of **counsellors** in 17 years, while the number of students has increased substantially. At **Selkirk College**, the Silver King and 10<sup>th</sup> Street Campuses have seen a dramatic increase in student numbers with the relocation of Multimedia and CIS, and the addition of KSA students. The number of counsellors, however, remains at **one**.

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## Selkirk to Remain Scent-Inconsiderate

A recent trend in occupational health & safety is to designate workplaces as "scent-free." This means that people who work or even visit a "scent-free" workplace are required not to wear strong perfume, after shaves or other fragrances.

Many Canadian post-secondary institutions, hospitals, and other workplaces have already adopted “scent-free” policies. The designation is a response to workers who have developed allergic reactions or sensitivities upon exposure to fragrances in their workplaces. Employers, to establish due diligence, towards preventing these types of workplace illnesses, designate their workplace as “scent-free.”

I submitted a proposal to the Selkirk College OH&S Committee that Selkirk College declare itself a “scent considerate” - not “scent-free” work place. My intent was to begin educating workers and students regarding excessive use of personal fragrances.

In the proposal, I noted that Selkirk College buildings are shared by many, during much of the year the College buildings have limited fresh air exchange, the chemistry of scents has evolved from relatively simple botanical extractives dissolved in alcohol to synthetic molecules dissolved in more complex solvents, and there have been well-documented cases of adverse reactions and sensitivities by people exposed to scents.

I suggested that as a “scent considerate” work place, Selkirk College post signs on all doors into the College buildings that state, “Selkirk College is a scent considerate work place. Please refrain from using scents to the extent that they may irritate others. Thank you for your co-operation.”

I proposed that the same notice be included in the College calendar. I suggested that with these steps in place, faculty will be more comfortable requesting that students refrain or limit their use of scents. Further, support and administrative workers will be more comfortable advising their co-workers if scents are irritating.

This seemed an appropriate first step towards addressing of this issue.

*--Rob Macrae*

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## Local Bargaining Update

Local bargaining has started here. Your committee members are Judy Deon, Sally Glock, Janet Mayr, Su Meredith, Paris Voykin, Jeff McKeil from FPSE and Bev Onischak, Chair. On October 5th we met with the employer for 33 minutes to discuss the protocol for bargaining. The protocol is the set of rules that guide how negotiations will be conducted. At that meeting we did not get agreement on the protocol and hope to do so at our next meeting. We are asking the College for complete financial disclosure and they are considering the request.

We have a day of bargaining scheduled for December 16th and have asked for two more days the following week. These dates have not been confirmed.

On the 16th we hope to complete and sign the protocol agreement, table our demands, and receive the College’s proposals. We will be exchanging documents before our first meeting and thus may even be able to do some bargaining.

After each meeting the bargaining committee will send out a summary of the proceedings.

For information about the local and provincial language that we have tabled and the employer’s responses, see the SCFA intranet at [www.scfa.ca](http://www.scfa.ca). Please send any comments about bargaining to the discussion board on the intranet or contact any of the bargaining committee members. We are all on the Castlegar campus.

*--Bev Onischak*

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## Why all the fuss about Academic Freedom?

SCFA Chief Bargainer Bev Onischak reports to us that the employer representatives at Common Table bargaining refuse to discuss academic freedom. They insist colleges are teaching institutions and therefore do not need such rights and privileges. Nancy Oliveri-type scenarios aside, if your teaching is informed by your own research and scholarly activity, their view is quite distressing. But other contexts point to the need for academic freedom. Read on to see if these affect you.

Recently at Camosun College, a male student in a literature course objected to a novel that was on the curriculum on religious grounds. He stated that the novel *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich, made him think of women “lasciviously.” The College lawyer was consulted and advised that if this case went to the Human Rights Tribunal the student would likely have won. The student was given another novel to read and his exam was prepared and marked by another instructor. As an English instructor, I shared the half-joking response of those who said: “find me a novel that doesn’t make one think lasciviously about women!” Nor can I imagine the novel that doesn’t have the potential to offend at least one person in any given classroom.

Such examples raise concerns about the co-opting of academic freedom, along with the language of diversity and duty to accommodate. How do we interpret a student’s right to a safe and comfortable learning environment? How do we retain control over our curriculum and the right to pursue cutting-edge and/or controversial topics when these conflict with the student’s “right” to not feel upset?

And where does this right come from? According to Diane Ravitch, author of *The Language Police*, the American school testing industry believes children won’t be able to test well if they encounter something upsetting. There is absolutely no research, she insists to support such a theory. Now take a look at your textbooks (yes, even college-level texts). Are they big on colour but short on controversy?

As Ravitch shows, in the fairy tale world of educational publishing there are no heroines (sexist), blizzards (regional prejudice), rats (too scary) or owls (culturally insensitive because they are associated with death in some cultures). In Michigan you won’t find reference to aliens or extraterrestrials because that would imply evolution of all things. In their attempts to not offend, she argues, publishers are offering our children bloodless history textbooks that border on inaccuracy and bowdlerized literature devoid of controversial language or topics. Happily, our students learn, the world is free of conflict. And hey, if there really is no conflict, then we don’t need academic freedom do we?

Take another look around. Did you notice how many pop machines appeared on this campus over the summer? As Peter Clayton from Local 21 observed in his report on Media Democracy Day, the classroom is considered virgin marketing territory. We have all heard about teachers relying on or being forced to use curricula packages peddled to them through corporations who offer the sales pitch: “who knows the media better than the media themselves, and therefore who better to lead the way in media education.” And curriculum materials are not limited to media education. Materials from *Turner Learning* include Current Events, Business, Math, Health, Science, Technology, English, Social Studies and Geography. Surely, academic integrity *and* academic labour are at stake here.

Add to this, “rights” stemming from the consumer model of education that brooks student complaints that they didn’t get the grade they paid for, and it is no wonder academic freedom seems to be under attack.

*--Tracy Punchard*

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## Musings from your Chief Steward

[aka VP Contract Administration for “newbies,” or Advocate for the, hmmm, “seasoned” SCFA members]:

It’s been a busy, but also unusual semester.

On the busy and usual side: one of the real advantages of this job [don’t laugh, there are high points!], is that sometimes members actually end up getting more [but always deserved] money in their pocket! Most typically this happens for non-regular members whose contracts contain errors. The two most common issues are:

- Inadequate prep time allowance, which should “normally” be 4 weeks for a 2 semester contract; and,
- Inappropriate vacation pay rate, which should be 8%--if your contract is for less than 6 months—or, 16% if you are faculty or 12% [yahoo, newly negotiated benefit] if you are a faculty assistant.

Another usual issue: Annualization refers to a process whereby an individual who has worked 4 consecutive semesters as a short-term employee, is due a 12-month contract if hired for work of a similar nature in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester. That translates into [finally] getting PD and paid vacation days over the summer; a great accomplishment! Congratulations to the member whose contract has been upgraded to an annualized one!

In terms of actions taken on behalf of regular[“seasoned,” maybe even “barbecued?”] employees, I am typically involved in discussions of workload calculations [can you do yours?], release time issues, and unfortunately, sick leave concerns. There’s no doubt in my mind that stress is a real issue for all of us, but maybe especially so for those of us who have job security! Ironic, isn’t it?

Finally, the unusual stuff: on behalf of the collective as a whole, grievances have been launched regarding the classifications of three positions [two exempt; one BCGEU]. Classification grievances are not something I do a lot of.

One area that is under considerable scrutiny is the work that is and will be done by the Distributed Learning Centre. Curriculum development is a critical component of **our** work as instructors, and we must be vigilant to ensure it remains work governed by the terms of our collective agreement. We must think carefully about how we define curriculum development in the online environment.

Also at issue in these grievances is the definition of managerial work. It is a more complicated issue to consider the various “managerial” roles that are/could be considered SCFA work. After all, several School Chairs, the Manager of the Computer Centre, and the Chief Librarian are all in the SCFA and are all managers of a sort. We’re currently having these discussions with the College.

And now a comment on bureaucracy, given that we’ve been operating without a Director of Human Resources for the semester. Although the learning curve has been a steep and slippery

one for many new managers, they have been trying to keep up with me! Things have never [in the 8 years I've been doing this] happened quickly around here, and I don't really think it's been any slower than usual this semester. For this we should give management credit! Probably the most difficult aspect of my role this semester has been the fact that almost no one is around anymore who knows what used to happen [aka past practice]. So, either management just believes me [maybe not their first choice (grin)], or I have to go through all the logic of past discussions to get them to understand why a certain action/interpretation exists. This, I admit, can be tiring. Especially when management doesn't even take the time to ask me why we have a certain position, or what our response will be if they take certain actions. Proactive they are not. So I chase them down when I can, because I really would prefer we come to agreement before grievances have to be filed. I miss the "old-timers" in management who trusted me enough to solicit my opinion. "Glory Days", eh?

Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions, or better yet, "break in" those new Stewards and give one of them, or all of them, a call! [I think I'm going to like this extra help!]

*--Monica*

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