



# On Stream

Newsletter of the Selkirk College Faculty Association

December 2016

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Duff Sutherland

Let's bring on the holidays!

The SCFA executive is working on several projects this academic year.

In September we had our local Open the Doors event. At that event we gave away about \$35,000 worth of textbooks to students. All the feedback that I had about the event (especially from students) was positive. It was largest local event so far as part of the FPSE's provincial campaign about the underfunding of the system. It was great to have FPSE president George Davison and two students from the SCSU, Zach Bunting and Kavy James, speak at the event. We have now collected about 300 pledges to support the campaign which will continue all the way to May's provincial election.

A further positive outcome of our local Open the Doors campaign is that we have strengthened our relations with the Student Union. Our political campaigns are similar. The SCSU campaign for accessible postsecondary is "Don't Close the Doors." Along with the textbook giveaway, the SCFA executive also gave financial support to two Nursing students whose leadership project focused on promoting the Student Union's "Fight for \$15" campaign to raise the minimum wage in BC. In this issue of *On Stream* you will find an article by a member of the SCSU board, Zach Bunting, about the SCSU's campaigns this fall.

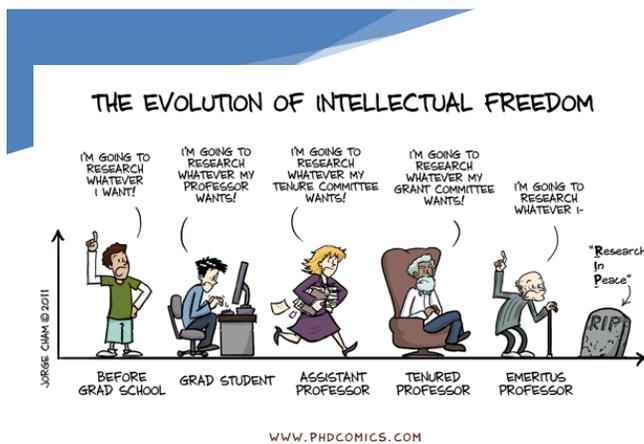


Working with the student activists has been inspiring and fun. Students bear the burden of increased tuition and extra fees. We see them as our most important allies in our political campaign to promote accessible, affordable postsecondary education.

In the New Year, we will continue our Open the Doors campaign with another textbook giveaway and pledge drive. Thanks to all of you who have agreed to participate. Our campaign will also sponsor an open source textbook forum.



The executive is also planning a forum on Academic Freedom. We were able to get some academic freedom language into our collective agreement during the last round of bargaining. As part of the bargaining process, we made an agreement with the college to host a discussion on the importance of academic freedom at a community college. Stay tuned for more information



about these events! They will be academic events but they will be a way for members to meet and socialize with other members. Please attend. I will look forward to seeing everyone there.

Finally, the SCFA executive is in transition. Tracy Punchard has stepped down from her shared position as VP Liaison. The executive has appointed Rebecca Jacobson to assume all duties as VP position until the spring AGM. Thanks to Tracy for her excellent, longstanding service to the SCFA executive. Thanks to Rebecca for taking on the position.

Have a great holiday!

## GRIEVANCE AT A GLANCE

Lui Marinelli

Grievances could be seen as a test of our collective agreement and provide some insight into the thinking of management. Normally, in the grievance process, the griever, the VP contract administration (me) and some management representatives know all the details and the SCFA executive know the basics...but that's it. In an effort to provide all members a bit of a look inside of one of these, I am, with the consent of the involved member, providing a Reader's Digest version of one case, always with an eye to maintaining member confidentiality.

## The Case Of "Crying Wolf"

A bit of history first. As a part of the regularization discussions we had during bargaining, we had "agreed" that the rules of regularization were different for regular members that weren't 100%. So why the quotes around the word agree? Without quotes, then it means that you can now find this agreement in writing in our collective. With quotes, it means that we came to this understanding in bargaining but it isn't articulated in writing. It is hopefully written in notes and that can be powerful but is not bomb proof. Either side can try to argue a slightly different understanding of that "agreement...but I digress.

In situations when proportional regular members get newly created work (i.e., extra sections, labs, or a new course), that work needs to be around for 2 years and if in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year some work is still there, it gets regularized regardless of the amount. For those with only short term contracts, it needs to be at least 50% over that same 3-year period.

The other thing that is different but applies to everyone is that if the work that is now available is in no way considered new (has been taught for multiple years) and has a future (no plan for dropping the course), then the work should be given a regular, not short term for 2 years.

So, a member who had been teaching a course for multiple years retired and therefore that course became available. It was assigned to a proportional regular member but given as short term. We asked why? It appeared that it fit the second scenario that I described. The response we got was that they agreed that the course had history to it, but it may not have a future. They were planning on doing a review of the program and as such there was uncertainty for that course and that allowed them to give it as short term.

So why worry? The member still got the work. The difference here was two-fold. First, the short term contract was for only eight months. If given as regular, the member would have had that work for the full year. Second, if the work was given as short term and then they decided at some point that they were going to discontinue the work, there would be no severance. If that was allowed to happen, then it would be a very smart business decision to "cry review" a year before

they are planning on discontinuing courses or programs, convert the work to short term and then never pay severance. However, severance is one of the fundamental aspects of our relationship with the employer. It is a benefit that was bargained for and agreed to long ago. We don't want this bargained benefit to be slowly whittled away.

Also, if we allow the employer to "cry review" and for a year or two to convert what should be given as regular work to short term, then our members lose 2 months of salary each year. The employer has every right to review a course or program and make changes, but the status of the work can't change until after a review has been completed, not before. We grieved.

Again, we took this grievance to stage two as there had been many discussions already. At stage two they denied the grievance. We took the grievance to stage 3, to the president, and it was again denied for the same reasons. We took it to stage 4, arbitration. That is where the lawyers get involved arguing the case in front of an arbitrator. This stage takes a lot of time and the farther in it goes with lawyers the more expensive it gets. In the meanwhile, a whole year past. In this current year, that same workload was now given as regular to the member. The dean asked if that resolved the grievance. It didn't. We needed the work to have been given as regular last year so that the member could be made whole in a monetary sense and also given as regular so that our understanding of the "agreement" is also kept whole.

In further discussions with the employer, I learned that they offered to pay the difference but would not agree to the regularization last year. The concern for the union is that if we allow this one to slip past, then it can be used against us in the future... "you allowed us to do it before, so you can't say no now."

Here is where we have to balance the good of the union, the good of the member, and the good of the college. Do we fight to the end, having FPSE spend a bunch of money, drag the issue along for another year, keep the member's status for this work in limbo for that time? Or can we find some middle ground?

In the end, we accepted the offer by the employer, with one addition: they paid the member the money lost last

year. They don't have to regularize the work last year (our demand) but the agreement is done on a without prejudice basis. This means that they can't come back in the future to use it against us. Although we believe that our interpretation of the facts was correct, we've not lost ground on the issue. We will continue to raise the regularization issue in labour-management meetings to try to develop a better understanding with the employer so that we won't have to have this fight again.

## YOUR PENSION PLAN

**John Josafatow**

I attended my first Pension Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting this past October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. College reps, such as myself, as well as trustees of our pension fund, were present. Here is a summary of some of the discussions.

According to an actuarial report generated every three years, our funds sit at a 3.6% surplus. This is seen as good news, one indication being that the investment decisions are giving good rates of return. Having said that, there is a review being carried out regarding risk management. An issue with retired members is an adequate benefits plan. At this point retired members need to purchase a plan where the premiums may outweigh the benefits. There is ongoing discussion to see if it's beneficial to integrate with other plans such as Ontario's (proposed) Plan or the BC Teacher's Plan.

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"On my 65th birthday, I'm going to lie down in a crop circle and wait for aliens to abduct me. That's my retirement plan."

Probably the most discussed theme was under the umbrella of "Transition to Retirement." Basically, given baby boomer demographics where there is a bulge in the workforce in their 60's and more and more people are

working longer, an issue is arising where old folks like me are simply not retiring. Already there are faculty working in to their 70's. The initial numbers are quite staggering and some say this is the tip of the iceberg. So, how can we encourage retirement? One existing solution is our Early Retirement Incentive Program (ERIP) but most faculty work beyond this incentive. Another idea is called "Phased Retirement" where someone could have a reduced workload, collect a partial pension, and maintain 100% salary. A draft policy is being developed and I'll keep you posted.

## OPEN EDUCATION

**Tracy Punchedard**

With curiosity battling skepticism, I attended the Open Education Strategy Forum in Vancouver on October 6. The event itself was well organized, the hosts enthusiastic, and the speakers knowledgeable.

I suspect my experience of Open Education resources is typical. Every once in a while I am motivated to see what's out there but after half an hour or so of searching I give up. I was hoping the conference would get me beyond that.

What I gained from the conference is motivation. The message of social justice strongly appealed to me. By working with Open Education, faculty would directly improve the affordability and accessibility of education for both domestic and international students. I also saw the potential for Open Education to take faculty out of their silos and generate far more collaboration and dialogue about what we teach, why and how.

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But not everyone wants to "share" the results of their own hard work and ingenuity with others to simply pick up and use, and I can understand the motivations for that reluctance. Open education puts faculty in a very different relationship to research, course materials and

curriculum and it is understandable to be wary of how administrations might try to take advantage of this resource.

Speakers at the conference stressed that for Open Education to work, motivation must come from faculty. Faculty need PD, not more overviews of the principles of Open Education, but someone who can bring their open education resources with them and walk faculty in a specific discipline through the steps of how to join in the Open Education community.

If that community exists. As far as English and TWC goes, after the conference I searched again and after half an hour I gave up. What is available is minimal and terrible. So here is one opportunity where Selkirk could take the lead. But for Open Education to work at Selkirk, motivated faculty also need support from administration in the form of time and money, aka release. Otherwise we are all waiting for someone else to do all the work and "share" it with us, which isn't the principle behind Open Education.

## STUDENT'S UNION

**Zack Bunting (SCSU Secretary)**

Winter is rolling in and students have come through another season of midterms. We have a busy year planned for the Selkirk College Student's Union (SCSU), and now is an ideal time to reflect on the year so far, and plans for the year ahead. We are in an election year, which means campaigning for student issues is priority. As your membership is acutely aware, education issues are everyone's issues.

And so the Local has been busy campaigning at many of our own, and our allies' events on campus and in the communities. Most recently, directors have been visiting the picket lines of United Steelworkers Local 9705 who have been locked out of Kootenay Savings. The Local is disturbed to see that management has been doing scab labour for the last several weeks, and has allegedly been receiving bonuses for it.

This fall members have also found us tabling with the SCFA at the FPSE Textbook Giveaway, and the West Kootenay Labour Council's Protein for People event. It is vital that we continue to campaign for lower tuition and the removal of the many barriers to accessing post-

secondary education. This year we will be focusing on promoting the British Columbia Federation of Students (BCFS) campaigns Squash the Squeeze, and Don't Close the Doors, and the BC Federation of Labour's campaign Fight for \$15.

This October Chairperson Harkanwalpreet Kaur presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance on the importance of returning funding to Adult Basic Education (ABE). The Local followed this with a written in-depth review of the necessity of doing so. These actions were repeated by several other BCFS Member Locals. Our Local's recommendations can be found in the *Report on the Budget 2017 Consultations* which was recently released.

The SCSU is proud to say that after a presentation to city council, we can now add the city of Nelson to our list of municipal endorsements for the Don't Close the Doors campaign, a campaign to return funding to ABE. Following this success, we plan to request endorsements from Trail and Castlegar as well. Support for this campaign continues to grow as it becomes ever obvious that the Christy Clark government is forcing would-be students out of an essential education and the economy.

In the interest of protecting students' right to affordable accessible post-secondary education, this fall we are continuing to successfully collect signatures for the Fight for \$15 campaign, to raise minimum wage to a livable fifteen dollars an hour. We have continued to do campaign tabling regularly at events, and are now supporting a team of nursing students on doing the same. The Local has been teaching effective tactics as they promote the campaign's goal as promoting public health and services.

Beginning in January the SCSU plans to amplify student voices and member interests with a campaign to encourage students to vote in the May election. The campaign collects student pledges to vote, as the SCSU provides supplementary information on the logistics of how to do so. Considering the increase in the young voter turnout and advance polling in last October's election, we expect another student mobilizing success this spring. The SCSU recognizes parallels between the SCFA's concerns and our members', and will be working towards positive change this spring which will benefit us all.

## STATUS OF WOMEN

On December 6<sup>th</sup> the committee for the status of women held a sing-along and offered inspiration to commemorate the 14 women murdered at the École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989.

