



# On Stream

Newsletter of the Selkirk College Faculty Association

February 2015

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## Message from the President

Duff Sutherland

Bargaining a new collective agreement is the focus of the SCFA executive this semester. Our VP-Negotiations, Victor Villa, provides you with an update in this issue. He was in Vancouver for two weeks for the common table negotiations with the negotiators from eight other FPSE locals. I talked to him on the phone most evenings while it was going on. I was impressed by the intensity of the experience which reflected the commitment of the negotiators to get the best possible deal for their members. They well understood that our livelihoods and working conditions were at stake and took their roles very seriously. It was high pressure situation which led to a tentative deal. Thanks Victor for your work there!

We have now moved to the local table where our bargaining committee has put in a good deal of effort including spending time together over the reading break to develop our proposals. We finished the first round last week in glamorous L-13. We have a good committee that works well together and a highly professional staff representative in Leah Squance on our side of the table. Further rounds are coming up in March and early April.

We heard news about the college's budget at a recent meeting for union and exempt staff representatives. The college is projecting a balanced budget with no layoffs but ongoing "efficiencies." The news of no layoffs is certainly positive but the

responses to the bargaining survey reveal that a decade of efficiencies and cuts has negatively affected our working conditions.

The college has budgeted for wage increases which it expects the government to fund. We also heard that the college, like all the BC colleges, is looking to do more contract training and to increase the number of international students. We have raised concerns about both these initiatives. International student tuition generates a profit but members have told us that these students require increased support to succeed. We will be watching for the college's proposed student plan this spring.

I encourage you to complete the FPSE climate survey by 5:00pm on March 6. I distributed the link to you earlier this week. Members of the executive estimate that our administration last conducted a climate survey seven years ago. So, this is a good opportunity for you provide feedback on the teaching and learning environment at the college. We will be interested to read your responses but also the results from across the province. I will pester you a least one more time to fill out the survey!

Finally. Thank you for all the work that you do for our association. It is appreciated. I hope that the rest of your semester goes well.

## **Bargaining Report**

**Victor Villa, VP Negotiations**

As some of you know, bargaining is done provincially as well as locally. I spent two weeks in Vancouver as part of the Negotiating Committee. Eight faculty associations composed this provincial negotiating committee; other members of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE) were observers but not signatories to the Memorandum of Agreement. These provincial, "Common Table" negotiations have been completed.

We have signed a tentative Memorandum of Agreement that includes a wage increase (5.5% over five years) and improved benefits. Local bargaining has just begun. Members of the local negotiating committee are Danielle Cossarini, Lui Marinelli, Duff Sutherland, Tracy Punchard, and Victor Villa. An auxiliary bargaining committee includes Leanne Reitan, Nadine Reynolds, Rena Vandenbos, and Deb Wandler.

We signed a protocol agreement on January 13, 2015. This protocol agreement sets the rules for bargaining. For example, we asked for "full financial disclosure," and they agreed. It was satisfying that after a brief discussion they agreed to fully disclose financial or any other relevant information that we need to bargain. We tabled and discussed our proposals last week. We have meeting dates in March and April.

The bargaining survey conducted earlier in the year revealed that SCFA members' bargaining priorities include a cost of living increase, extended health, academic freedom, regularization and addressing pay issues for researchers and research assistants, and the inequity of pay for online courses, etc. We have proposals in all these areas.

Once local bargaining is completed, you will be asked to ratify both the Local and the Common Agreement.

## **Budget Update**

**Tracy Punchard, VP Liaison**

On January 29<sup>th</sup> representatives of all employee groups were called to attend a budget meeting with management. It sounded grim and officious but turned out to be a Q and A. Duff Sutherland and I attended. In addition to the good news that major layoffs are not expected and the government will fund salary increases, here is what we learned:

### **The Book Store**

Our book store prices textbooks to compete with Amazon and Chapters. Students also get the benefit of our customer service so please encourage students to buy their texts from the college. The book store also prices office supplies to compete with local office supply stores and it makes a difference to their bottom line if we buy from them. I can attest that my daughter's favourite notebook is cheaper in our store than it is in town. They admit, however, that they can't compete with Wal-Mart. "No one can".

### **The Cafeteria**

The cafeteria still runs a deficit but this deficit is decreasing. The Castlegar cafeteria averages \$2000 a day in sales but summers are still costly.

### **International Students**

Selkirk International brings in a profit of \$400,000. Ensuing discussion emphasized that there are human beings behind these numbers and all groups expressed concern about how these students are supported. More people are needed to support these students, but these people need offices, computers, classrooms, etc. The pressure is being felt at all levels of the system.

### **The Blueprint for Education**

I will refrain from commenting on the blueprint itself (or I may turn blue!) The college feels they are in a good position to respond to the government's demands because they have never put all their eggs in one basket. We offer a variety of programming at Selkirk and this works to our advantage.

## The PD Page

SCFA members have access to two separate PD funds. Yes it is confusing to keep track of which PD fund you should apply to, when, and how, but much of the process is now centralized. The PD handbook really does tell you what you need to know and can be accessed at MySelkirk under Human Resources. Below are reports from Tracy Punchard and Rebecca Jacobson.



### Common PD funds

**Chair Tracy Punchard. Committee Members: Kim Verigin, Rhonda Schmitz, Rhy Andrews**

This fund prioritizes group activities but funds individual initiatives as well. Typically a group activity means that you are using the fund to benefit a large group of people at the college, for example by bringing in a guest speaker or hosting a workshop. On the other hand, a group of people, for example a School, may decide to send one or two people away for training etc. The important factor here is that the representative will be bringing this knowledge or skill back to the group in some defined way. There must be a demonstrable benefit to a larger group and specific plans with dates must be in place for how that benefit will be realized. Group applications need two supporting signatures in addition to the supervisor's signature.

Some of the group activities that were funded in 2014-15 included a Group Mediation workshop, Supporting Aboriginal Educators Summit, bringing a speaker to the SGRC UAV workshop, bringing a speaker to discuss wellness and nutrition in the

workplace, and sending Teaching and Learning fellows to various teaching and learning conferences and symposiums. This year, approximately half of the Common PD funds were used for group initiatives, the other half for individual activities. Because the fund was depleted, requests for "top-up" were denied.

The SCFA is thrilled that so many people are accessing this money because unlike Regular SCFA PD, this is a "use it or lose it" fund; any money left over at the end of the year does not carry over. The next round of applications will be vetted in March and applications are due Monday, March 2nd. The next date to submit requests to this fund will be June 1<sup>st</sup>. I look forward to hearing about and supporting your plans.

### SCFA Regular PD funds

**Chair Rebecca Jacobson. Committee Members: Coby Vandergaast, Almeda Miller, Tammie Clarke, Sian Landis, Rhonda Schmitz, Arleen Gallo**

It's been almost a year since I replaced Rita as Chair of your Regular PD committee, and I have really enjoyed it; the work is steady but very rewarding. It's been exciting to help you reach your professional development goals and to meet many members I didn't know before. I know the committee members find it fascinating to see the diversity of PD opportunities you get up to, and it's inspiring to know we have such creative and energetic colleagues.

If you haven't been taking advantage of your PD funds, we encourage you to consider this resource. Opportunities for life-long learning abound and we're here to help. Thanks to Rita, the process of applying for PD is easier than ever; your applications come to the committee electronically through your supervisor. We're happy to answer questions (as you know, there are no stupid ones) and help you plan ahead.

Thanks for your confidence in us!

## Status of Women Committee

Robbin Higgins

Last week's FPSE Status of Women Committee meeting was again a wonderful opportunity to find out what is happening on other campuses around the province in regards to the experiences and challenges of female faculty and students. Some committee members collaborated with community agencies around the Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> Day of Remembrance. Many of us, myself included, talked about how difficult the timing was this year with it falling both on a weekend and in the last week of classes. I did have a table at the Tenth Street Campus with 14 roses and information about violence against women, healthy relationships and referral suggestions. Sitting at the table I had provocative conversations about what men and women can do to create cultures of safety and respect. In addition, Jessica Morin organized a group of women who made dolls and an exhibit representing the Missing Aboriginal Women.

On **March 9<sup>th</sup> for International Women's Day**, I will be hosting a lunch for faculty and students at the Silver King Campus. We have Celine Magneche, a Resort and Hotel Management student from Cameroon joining us to talk about the vision and challenges facing the Girls School and Women's Empowerment project that she founded in her home country.

In addition, we will use some of the lunch time as a focus group to brainstorm how Selkirk College might want to approach creating a campaign around sexual safety and consent. Recent issues with Ghomeshi, Dalhousie and various other campus scandals have brought the issue into the spotlight these last two years. Committee members at the Vancouver meeting were amazed that Selkirk College does not have any security services and there was discussion around vulnerable situations that staff and students have encountered. Three nursing

students will join the lunch and help us explore ways of moving forward dialogue and on this important issue.

If you are interested in joining this lunch and conversation at Silver King campus **March 9<sup>th</sup>** at noon, please e-mail [rhiggins@selkirk.ca](mailto:rhiggins@selkirk.ca) by Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>.

It is an honour to be the SCFA representative on the SWC and I always come away from the provincial meetings impressed with the important work that union members are doing around the province.

## Human Rights and International Solidarity

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Jacinda Mack, mining coordinator for the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council, spoke to a packed audience in the Selkirk College Pit, visited classes, and presented again at the United Church in Nelson on the effects of the Mount Polley disaster. In Nelson, she was joined by Marilyn Burgoon who addressed her court battle in response to the Lemon Creek spill. Both presentations were followed by lively discussion and many people from the Slovan Valley attended.

Jacinda expressed her delight with the welcome that she received, interest of those present, attendance at the events, diversity of audience, and overall level of organization. Her visit was sponsored by the Federation of Post Secondary Educators and the SCFA. Many thanks to Mary Ann Morris, our HRIS rep for bringing us all together.

