



## *The Beacon*

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*The Beacon* is an information bulletin for StFXAUT members

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### ***President's Message***

Dear Members,

Last year, 2017, may be characterized as a year of disruption as we teach out of newly reclaimed and repurposed spaces. The disruption in physical space is however temporary and we look forward to new learning spaces for many of our Members and our students.

The disruption however is not the obvious hole in the ground beside the Nicholson Tower. The disruption is an academic disruption characterized by the decline in enrollment across all faculties, the cancellation of low enrollment courses, the lack of resources to support departmental infrastructure, the persistent lack of resources to support research dissemination, the looming \$3 M deficit for this fiscal year alone, the threat of automated scheduling and the unexpected announcement couched in campus restructuring of paid parking on campus.

As the term will soon come to an end, we are mindful that like the physical space disruption the academic disruption also needs to be temporary!

All the best for a successful and productive 2018.

Mary O.  
StFXAUT President

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## Alumna Shout-out: Rita Campbell

by Mary Oxner

The *Beacon* regularly features interviews with StFX University Alumni on the topic of their relationships with StFXAUT Members who challenged, inspired, or helped in some way. This issue's interview is with Rita Campbell (BSc, Math Honours, '78).



**The Beacon:** During your time at X was there a particular Professor, Librarian, Lab Instructor, Coady Program Staff Member, Nurse Educator, Extension Program Staff Member, or Learning Skills Instructor that helped you, inspired you, or was a mentor to you?

**Rita:** This is one of the most difficult questions to answer because there are so many people that I could list. There are awesome people at StFX. I know that sounds trite. If I have to pick ... my librarian colleagues.

**The Beacon:** You retired in 2016. What is something that has strikingly changed since your retirement? Is there anything that has hardly changed at all?

**Rita:** StFX has changed drastically in the past 35 years. Much of the campus itself has improved. Sadly, I feel something has been lost over the years: a comradery and sense of common purpose between the Administration and rest of campus. There is so much stress now. The last few years I worked in the library were extremely stressful.

**Rita:** These days I'm surrounded by beauty and nature and I'm thoroughly enjoying how time stretches and deadlines are non-existent. I'm rediscovering my creativity, and sleep. My sewing machine is getting a workout.

**The Beacon:** Why did you choose StFX for your undergraduate degree?

**Rita:** At that time StFX was the university of choice for most students in my area (Richmond County, Cape Breton). I had an older brother and sister who attended StFX. Five of the eleven members of our family have graduated from StFX. Antigonish was far enough from my home for me to think I was making a break from my family, yet close enough that I could easily make it home for long weekends.

**The Beacon:** At that time, what did you imagine you might do after you graduated?

**Rita:** I graduated with a BSc, Math Honours. I loved Math, I loved books and I loved the StFX Library. I would sit in different sections in the library and browse through the books around me. I was torn between becoming an Actuary or a Librarian. After graduation I worked for a year in the corporate actuarial department of a re-insurance company in Toronto and quickly discovered that my sympathies were not on the side of large for-profit corporations. I also wanted more interaction with people and the opportunity to work in towns as well as cities. I went to the University of Western Ontario for a Masters of Library Science. Incidentally, Mathematics is an excellent foundation for library science.

**The Beacon:** You're now retired from StFX - can you lead us along your path from StFX to your role as Chief Librarian and as Librarian at StFX?

**Rita:** I started as a Librarian at StFX in 1981 on a three-month contract to

correct catalogue records on a system called UTLAS but I think the University Librarian, Fr. Charlie Brewer, really hired me because I knew computer programming. The 35 years I spent as a Librarian at StFX were roughly broken into three phases - I have a threshold of about 10 years before becoming bored and needing a change of focus. I spent most of the first years working on library computers/systems, and programmed a computerized circulation system that was used by the library for eight years. I was University Librarian for 10 years beginning 1993. During that time we joined Novanet and vastly increased access to journal information through participation in the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) project. I stepped down as University Librarian in 2003 due to health issues. I spent most of the next years as Special Projects Librarian - focusing primarily on digitization projects - as well as a Reference Librarian and Liaison Librarian.

**The Beacon:** During your time at StFX as a student and/or as a Librarian were there any particular people who were particularly inspiring or helpful? Someone that influenced your career path?

**Rita:** I worked with many impressive individuals over the years. Barb Phillips is the person who had the most influence over my philosophy as a Librarian. She was the Librarian who trained me on reference when I first started at StFX. She never wavered from emphasis on the library user, in particular the student, as our primary motivation. Barb would inevitably ask "what does this mean for the students" whenever changes were discussed. Oddly, one of my other big influences

was not a person. The StFX Library holds a book that was published in 1524. For me, visiting the Rare Books Room was grounding: a reminder that libraries are not just about the immediacy, there is also significant responsibility to understand and respect long term consequences.

**The Beacon:** Did you work on any research projects when you were at StFX as a student? If so, what were these research projects? What about as a Librarian at StFX?

**Rita:** I didn't work on any research projects as a student. When I was University Librarian I was part of the steering committee which created the Canadian National Site Licensing Project, now the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN). This was the first multi-university Canada-wide group to receive a Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) grant. I was the only Librarian from a small university on the steering committee and on the team that defended the project to an international committee. At the time we in Atlantic Canada were the only region of the country in which all our universities signed on to the project. To give some sense of the challenges in starting a project this big - before they granted us matching funding - ACOA required that all Atlantic Canada university presidents tag Canadian National Site Licensing Project (CNSLP) as their priority research project and that all four provincial governments provide matching funds. Prior to this project, StFX Library provided access to about 1,500 academic journals in print.

Afterward StFX's access increased to more than 15,000 electronic titles. It was an exciting time for libraries.

I also enjoyed playing a large part in creating the StFX Digital Collections. I did my first project during a six month leave after I stepped down as University Librarian. I digitized a rare handwritten manuscript of local Gaelic poetry by Alexander MacDonald. My interest in digitizing small local collections was as counterpoint to [the] purchasing of the large non-local collections. Subsequently, as Special Projects Librarian I led a team that digitized a number of StFX collections, such as the StFX yearbooks, Alumni News, and academic calendars, as well as a number of local history books. Two larger projects during this time were Gael Stream (an audio collection of local Gaelic) and the Coady/Extension project. I believe that preserving and providing access to local materials is an essential role for libraries.

**The Beacon:** Feel free to add any additional comments that you might like to add.

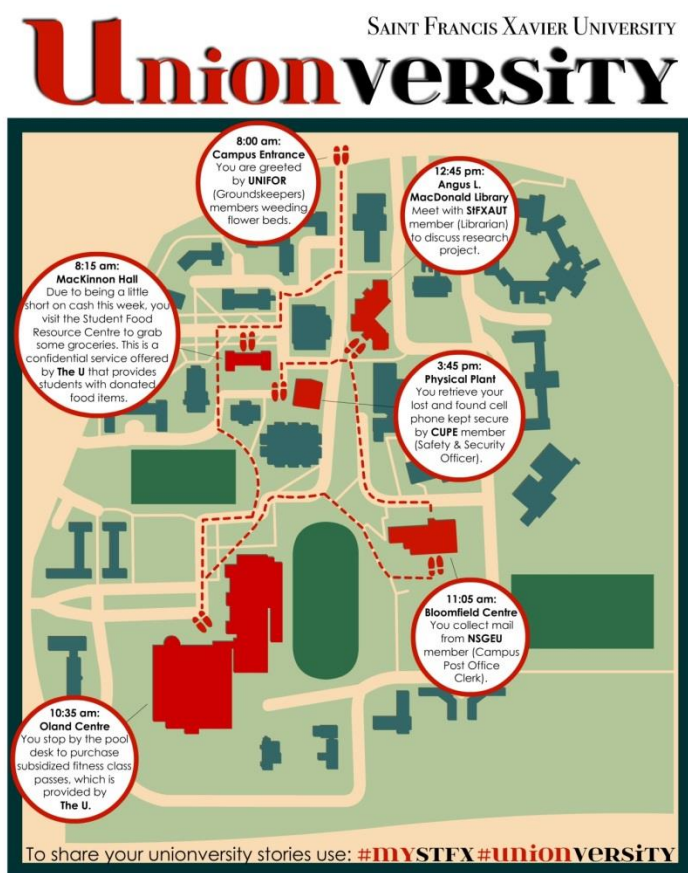
**Rita:** This has been something of a trip down memory lane. I have no doubt that I chose the right path when I chose librarianship over actuarial science. It has enabled me to work in a field where I was helping others, meeting interesting individuals, and learning continuously. Librarianship embraces grand values such as equality of access, lifelong learning, diversity and intellectual freedom. It is a wonderful field for the curious.

*Rita, the StFXAUT Executive Committee thanks you for your immense contribution and service to the Association and wishes you the very best in your retirement!*

- Executive Committee Member – Secretary 2014-2016; Member at Large 2012-2014
  - StFXAUT Negotiating Advisory Committee Member 2009-2010
  - Handbook Committee Chair 2009-2010; Member 2008-2010
    - Salaries and Benefits Committee Member 2008-2010
    - Salary and Benefits Committee Member 1991-1993

## Unioniversity: CUPE Local 1636

by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer



The Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU) was formed in 1958 and is the largest provincial public sector union in Nova Scotia, numbering over 30,000 members. Local 88 includes approximately 102 NSGEU members currently working over 16 different job types including machinist, animal care, administrative assistants, archival assistants, maintenance, and IT support staff at StFX University.

The StFX Students' Union (The U) is an organization run by StFX students, for StFX students, working work to make sure student voices are never silenced locally, provincially or federally. The U provides leadership opportunities for students in every year of study, from volunteer positions and jobs to societies, there are tons of ways to get involved. Check out our website (<http://theu.ca>) or come swing by the Student Union Building to learn more.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 1636 is an affiliated union located in Antigonish. CUPE is Canada's largest and fastest-growing union, representing workers in health care, education, municipalities, libraries, child care, universities, social services, public utilities, transportation, emergency services, and airlines. CUPE Nova Scotia, the provincial division, acts as the political voice of CUPE locals in Nova Scotia. CUPE Nova Scotia represents 19,000 workers in more than 140 local unions and across many different sectors. CUPE 1636 has 21 members, 12 full time and 9 casual, all of whom work with StFX Safety and Security Services.

UNIFOR Local 2107 is an amalgamated local union located in Antigonish. Maintenance workers such as Carpenters, Electricians, Painters, Plumbers, Power Engineers, Risk Attendants, and Food Service Workers are the trade workers at the university. The largest bargaining unit in Local 2107 is St. Francis Xavier University whose membership numbers approximately 115 workers. The Cleaners are the largest group at this workplace. Maintenance workers such as carpenters, electricians, painters, and plumbers are just some of the skilled trade workers of the university.

The St. Francis Xavier University Association of University Teachers (StFXAUT) is the certified bargaining agent for for full-time, part-time, and contract Faculty, Librarians and Archivists, Laboratory Instructors, Nurse Educators, Program Teaching Staff in both the Coady International Institute and the Extension Department, and instructors in the Writing Centre.

Over the next several issues *The Beacon* will highlight work performed and challenges faced by the non-academic Unions working at StFX University. This article profiles CUPE Local 1636. CUPE Local 1636 represents StFX Safety and Security Services employees (currently 12 full-time employees and 4 casuals). Last Fall *The Beacon* met with former CUPE Local 1636 President John Gormley and former Vice-President Dane Hiltz. Both Gormley and Hiltz were quick to emphasize that their “biggest issue is, and always has been, just the amount of time it takes to get things settled”.

For some time they have been trying to engage university Administration concerning risk assessment. “We asked the University what they consider our role to be for the University and they don’t know. They can’t give us a defined explanation of what specifically our exact role is here,” said Hiltz. This indecisiveness surrounding what Gormley

termed as “procedures for our responses for certain situations” impacts the safety of Safety and Security Services personnel.

Gormley and Hiltz emphasized that: “We want to do it together. We’re discussing it. We don’t want to be more or less told what we require. We want the risk assessment to determine what it is. So we don’t want to push for something we don’t need, but also we don’t want to not have what we need”.

When asked to clarify, Hiltz mentioned: “safety equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) -- things that we might not currently have that we want but it’s all procedural-based”. Risk assessment would be based on “past incidents, on past interactions with students, staff, and faculty, the public”.

Interactions with students have always been part of the job, but the nature of these has changed. Gormley noted that, “this has been a fairly good year”. Hiltz added that “it’s better than it used to be” and attributed the change to Student Life. Gormley agreed, crediting Student Life with being “more proactive”. Hiltz recalled that there “used to [be] incidents all the time. Recently, within the past couple of years, our involvement with the interior of residences has been non-existent. We don’t go into the residences unless requested by residence staff”.

As has been heard from other Unions on campus, things have improved following the change in Administration. Gormley noted that “just communicating is a success. It wasn’t as open. The doors were a little shut”.

Hiltz agreed: “It wasn’t until probably the last year or so that we even had quarterly meetings. We had biannual meetings [scheduled] with the [previous] Administration. That wasn’t happening at all. So that changed. Just 15 minute, 30 minute catch ups”.

The job’s biggest change is Safety and Security Services’ increased capacity to document incidents and interactions. Hiltz noted that, when he started six years ago, “we didn’t have a main service desk location. There was no person in here [gestures to the office surroundings] answering the phone, making cards and keys, that didn’t exist. My first shift I had a chair to sit on, a phone, and a computer that didn’t have anything on it. They said, ‘if the phone rings, answer it’. It didn’t ring”.

Hiltz continued: “Access control wasn’t really part of the whole deal. Residence office controlled keys for students if they were having any sort of key issue. ID cards were issued by residence office. All that we handle now”.

“Like night and day,” Gormley described the transformation in recordkeeping and documentation. He credited current manager Robert Proctor for implementing new systems. Safety and Security Services is now the first point of contact for anyone working, living, visiting, or otherwise engaged on campus. According to Gormley, “it’s gone from the phone not ringing to us responding to twenty thousand service requests a year”.



## StFX World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Society by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer



Dr. Mary Oxner, StFXAUT President, presents a cheque for \$4,573 to WUSC Society members (left to right):  
Jordan MacDonald, Farhiyo Salah, and Izaak MacMullin  
photo credit: Susan MacKay

The World University Service of Canada (WUSC) is, according to their [website](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to providing education, employment, and empowerment opportunities for youth around the world”. WUSC has local committees across Canada including the StFX WUSC Society.

The [StFX WUSC Society’s Facebook page](#) explains that:

[t]he Student Refugee Program is a sponsorship program through which support is given to a student registered by the United Nations as a refugee to pursue post-secondary studies in Canada. For twelve consecutive years, StFX has admitted one student each year to the sponsorship program. The students that have been welcomed to StFX represent displacement due to civil war, persecution and genocide in regions such as Sudan, Rwanda, the DRC, and Ethiopia.

One of the WUSC priorities identified on their website is “[e]nsuring that youth have access to quality education”. This past fall the StFXAUT contributed \$4,573 to the StFX WUSC Society to assist with this goal. StFXAUT funds will cover a second year refugee student’s meal plan fees. *The Beacon* had the opportunity last fall to speak with StFX

## **Announcement**

*The StFXAUT Executive Committee is pleased to announce that three undergraduate students were the recipients of the 2017-2018 StFXAUT Student Bursary. Two three-credit bursaries (\$854.00) and one six-credit bursary (\$1,708.00) were awarded in October.*

WUSC Society President Isaak MacMullin and Vice President Jordan MacDonald to learn more about the committee and the work that they do on campus.

StFX University covers tuition, residence, and meal plan fees for the student's first academic year. Money raised by the StFX WUSC Society pays airfare, immigration fees, and costs associated with living on-campus during the summer. MacMullin noted that students receive "a little bit of money in their second, third, and fourth year, but mainly we cover first year". MacDonald emphasized that there are "no extra payments [for refugee students] other than what you can receive through regular student loans and grants". The bulk of the funding comes from a \$4 levy that is part of the student union fee.

The StFX WUSC Society also helps the student access a Nova Scotia Health Card (MSI), select a mobile account, purchase a laptop or other internet device, and get them to their first classes. Part of their role is to, as MacMullin put it, "get them comfortable with how things work at StFX".

Selecting a student likely to thrive at StFX is a priority. Once the StFX WUSC Society submits an Intent to Sponsor with WUSC, they receive a brochure of eligible applicants. This includes a photograph, an origin story, test scores, and a description of academic interests. MacDonald said that this information gives the StFX WUSC Society a better idea of "what they're interested in doing [and if] the programs they are looking for are available here". MacDonald provided the example of "someone interested in art and design [and how it was] not fair for us to take this person on and then force them into a BA when they really would have liked a BFA".

StFX WUSC Society also communicates desired characteristics and qualities of students to WUSC. At one point, they were receiving only male applicants. Wanting to support female students, the StFX WUSC Society requested to receive female applicants. The portfolios of applicants deemed as not necessarily a great fit for StFX are circulated among other universities. MacMullin noted, "If we don't pick someone, it doesn't mean that they're never going to get a chance".

MacMullin admitted that the StFX WUSC Society is "kind of a program that flies under the radar a little bit". Recent promotional activities including what MacMullin described as "a thank you drive earlier this year where we gave a free coffee and cookies and said thank you for giving \$4 because most students don't know that they give \$4 to this program" have helped, there is a recognized need to raise the group's profile. The group has been in touch with Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace [SAFE] for ideas on how to better do that. Still, as MacDonald said, "people are starting to recognize it a little bit. People are starting to recognize the WUSC shirts".

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## Antigonight: Art After Dark Festival

by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer



Julia Walker, Laura Stinson, and Noella Murphy's project "Shear Ingenuity, A Road Less Gravelled"  
photo credit: Philip Girvan

The eighth annual Antigonight: Art After Dark Festival took place between September 1 and 16, 2017. *The Beacon* spoke to ceramist and sculptor Fenn Martin: a co-founder of the festival and the 2017 artistic director. Until taking a position last fall with NSCAD University, Fenn Martin worked part-time as an Instructor with the StFX Art Department.

Martin described the festival's relationship with the StFXAUT. Members of the StFX Art Department Faculty were essential to the festival getting off the ground. Faculty representatives, some of whom served on the board of directors of Antigonish Culture Alive (formerly GAPACC -- Guysborough Antigonish Pictou Arts and Culture Council), were among those who identified the need for Antigonish to have an open, accessible nighttime art festival. Antigonight: Art After Dark was launched and it continues to grow.

In addition to helping to create the festival, StFXAUT members have been integral to its ongoing success. Art Department personnel have led projects. Music Department Faculty have performed at a number of festivals. Education Department Faculty and students have demonstrated projects. A 2012 project "One Giant Leap for Art" was a collaboration between the Physics Department and the Art Department, Librarians, Writing Centre staff, and StFX students have been featured as artists.

## ***A NOTE OF APPRECIATION***

*Thank you to Social Affairs Committee Members for organizing the Welcome Social at Crystal Cliffs on Saturday, September 9th and the festive year-end gathering for AUT Members on Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup>.*



Julia Walker, Laura Stinson, and Noella Murphy's project "Shear Ingenuity, A Road Less Gravelled"; photo credit: Philip Girvan

The collaboration continued throughout this year's festival: Pamela Johnson, Program Teaching Staff with the Coady International Institute's International Centre for Women's Leadership, exhibited "Take(n) Space" a multimedia installation at the People's Place Library on Friday, September 8. Abena Amoako-Tuffour, the International Student Engagement Coordinator with the StFX Department of Internationalization, read selections from her upcoming book, *The Way We Hold On*, at the Waffle Bus Stop on Saturday, September 16. "Print Prospects", which featured the work of various Faculty Members, took place that evening in the StFX Art Department's printmaking and painting studios. "One Minute Memories", the Antigonish County Adult Learning Association's video installation took place on the StFX Art Gallery Lawn.

StFXAUT Members volunteer with the festival. 2017 was the second straight year that Rhonda Semple volunteered. Speaking to *The Beacon*

prior to the festival, Dr. Semple emphasized a belief that the festival plays an important role bringing together the Town and the University. It allows StFX Faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to meet people that they otherwise might not. [It] is also a chance for the University to give something back to the community. It's good for the students to see that Antigonish is, as Dr. Semple put it "a real town".

Rachel Power, StFX class of 2004 (BEd) and 2015 (MEd), is an Instructor with the StFX Education Department. Power also works as Arts Coordinator with Antigonish Culture Alive. Power echoed Dr. Semple's statement concerning the importance of having have StFXAUT Members connect with other members of the Antigonish community. Power described the festival as "transformative" and said that Antigonight "invigorates and excites the creative minds on campus".

To learn more about Antigonish Culture Alive and the Antigonight Art After Dark festival, please visit the Antigonish Culture Alive [website](#).

## Food for Thought: A Profile of Riley Chisholm

by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer

Shortly after completing PhD studies at York University, Dr. Riley Chisholm joined StFX University's Department of Sociology. A desire to be in a coastal, rural setting was part of what prompted Dr. Chisholm to seek a position at StFX. Upon arriving in Antigonish for a job interview, Dr. Chisholm said that, "I immediately fell in love with it. I loved my job interview if that's possible for me to say that. I have always been drawn to coastal communities".



Dr. Riley Chisholm  
photo credit: Gabriel Chisholm

StFX has been a positive experience professionally. Chisholm emphasized that, "I have been surrounded by people whom I've come to admire and respect for many, many reasons. I have been encouraged here. The department itself, I would like to suggest, is among the most friendly and supportive that I've ever encountered".

Chisholm told *The Beacon* that shortly after arriving in Antigonish in 2008, "I began raising goats and sheep, chickens and wanted really to pursue an understanding of so many of the people that live here. How they gathered their enthusiasm for farming and food production". Chisholm described Antigonish as, "such a bright light: if you look across Canada where things are happening, rural communities are not necessarily as vibrant as Antigonish is as far as the local food movement and people working in the area of the environment and climate".

Chisholm admitted being "very much prone to doing research which reflects where I am". Research at York involved "looking at the sociology of fear. Doing stuff on panic disorder and gender". Antigonish has provided Chisholm with "a real wonderful combination of ingredients that makes this just the right way for me to head with my research. I think the last decade here has been quite remarkable with the number of groups and organizations that emerged".

Chisholm emphasized that "the University's been actually quite wonderful in terms of, I'm going to say the Coady Institute has done an exceptional job of bringing people [together] who understand this problem, this fundamental problem of democracy". Chisholm cited the visit by Dr. Vandana Shiva as an example of this commitment to creating a space where conversations around food, farming, and democratic participation can take place.

Despite the positive aspects of this foray into farming and getting to know local farmers, Chisholm also recognized that “how we think of food, how we conceive of food, how we disburse food and grow it has been turned into this violent interaction with the earth, with the planet”. As a result, “farming is an entryway into thinking about race, colonialism, gender”. Chisholm suggested that industrial farming is “very much patriarchal. It proposes a kind of attraction to big tractors and fertilizers. We can think about farming and agriculture as through a gendered lens. [Though] we don’t often think of farming as a relationship with a mother, but certainly it is. You plant the seed. You need to nurture it and it will grow”.

These considerations led to the creation of a course called *SOCI 398 ST: Sociology of Agriculture and Sustainability*. The StFX Sociology Department course description reads:

This course begins with an interdisciplinary survey of the scientific, philosophical, political, social and cultural aspects of global agriculture and food production. Topics examined include the green revolution, the relationship between agricultural and social sustainability, local food versus export economies, food security, food sovereignty and justice, as well as biotechnology, soil science and climate farming. We will also explore the nature and composition of food, techniques and concepts of food science, practices used in food processing, and issues related to food safety. Farm visits are included.

Chisholm noted that the course is designed to “use the local and its particularities. One of the major projects is doing interviews with farmers and making a documentary in which they are going to be able to utilize various farming instances in the local area to highlight global patterns”. Farm visits situate local practices within a global context. Food insecurity, succession planning, and the impacts of the agricultural-industrial complex are issues affecting local farmers as well as those around the world, and the course is an opportunity for students to “understand, for instance, that this is a dairy community and understand some of the obstacles to farming here. So we talk to farmers on their farms and say why are you, you know, doing this? Or why are you shutting things down?”.

In addition to visiting area farms, the course involves, as Chisholm described it, “getting students into the grocery store” and asking “why is there corn in just about everything that is available?”.

This leads to a better understanding of how “some of the policy-based and government endorsed and industry backed obstacles to local food security” and then connecting this to global occurrences. Chisholm mentions, “looking [at] Catalan and why are 2000 tractors filling the streets of Barcelona. Why is this politicization around food happening at this time and place, around the world?”.

“Part of my teaching and part of my research is working to grow communities that work together. They understand their interrelationship, their interdependence”.

*Dr. Riley Chisholm is a Board Member of the Antigonish Community Food Bank.*



## CAUT Contract Academic Staff Conference, Toronto, ON October 20-21, 2017

by Deirdre M. Smythe, Part-Time Academic Instructor, Sociology Department

There's an old saying that goes roughly: "it costs money to be cheap". It is the idea that paying a fair price for a good quality item that lasts for years makes sound economic sense. Investment in cheap goods will likely cost you more money in the long run. I heard it forty years ago from a tough old iron worker who hailed from Nova Scotia – he was a raising gang foreman on the CN Tower Antenna Project in 1974. To me, this pithy epithet aptly describes the current predicament of Part-Time Academic Faculty in academic settings world-wide. The economic model upon which present-day universities are managed has been extrapolated from the business world. Universities are now run like businesses – regrettably, I had a student who recently submitted a written assignment that began with the statement: "Universities ARE businesses!".

It is quite rare these days to find a university president with a traditional academic background – this used to be the norm. More and more administrative positions in universities are being created with bloated wages that situate them high on the Sunshine List. This is drawn from the current practice in the business world of giving inflated salaries to executives and the CEOs of companies. One of the ways universities can afford to pay these administrators is through hiring more and more poorly paid, Part-Time Teaching Staff, creating a situation where precarious work in universities has become the norm, and an acknowledged crisis. The strategy began in the mid-1970s and has been getting progressively worse ever since (Rajagopal and Farr 269). Nathan R. Elliott, a Professor and Chair of the English Department at Memorial University (Grenfell Campus), NL, has written an opinion piece in *The Independent* on the costs of exploiting Contract Academic Faculty. He argues that 'a workplace is as strong as it treats its most vulnerable employees'. Universities are more and more dependent on Contract Faculty to function economically, yet in many cases they are treated as if they are invisible by administrators and put in icy competition with tenured Faculty. Ironically, I believe the commodification of Contract Academic Faculty represents an addiction that will ultimately cost universities more money – it's become a failed economic strategy. In other words, it costs money to be cheap.



"It's not enough that we succeed. Cats must also fail."

Source: Google Images

I attended the **Contract Academic Staff Conference** held October 20-21, 2017, in Toronto. It was the first conference of its kind organized by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in seven years. Two more



Professors from StFX attended: Professor Martin Sastri from Catholic Studies who is the Part-time Academic Faculty Representative for the StFXAUT, and Professor Mary Oxner, the President of StFXAUT. Not only was I pleased to be chosen as a delegate, what I learned there gave me some real hope that things can improve for Contract and Part-Time Academic Staff in Canada. The exploitive use of Contract Academic Faculty has become a controversial issue, increasingly supported by the higher ranks of academia. At the conference, Alison Hearn from Western University reported that its Union was successful in mobilizing tenured Faculty to argue for full-time justice for Part-Time Faculty in their recent contract negotiations. *They put this issue at the top of their bargaining agenda*, and used it as a way to focus on what can unite academic workers.

The Contract Academic Staff Conference was divided into a simple agenda of theory and praxis: the default categories of academic work. **Day One** consisted of a lecture series of five presentations of ongoing research in the area of precarious academic work by fourteen presenters from universities across Canada. The scholarship of the individual researchers was superb. At the end of the sessions, delegates were organized into five groups: Building a Collective Bargaining Response (the language of a collective agreement), Filing Grievances, Creating Attractive Audio-Visual Material, Making Effective Smart Phone Movies, and Communicating through the Media. On **Day Two**, participants were given a theoretical scenario where they were allowed to develop practical activist skills: the Great North University Academic Staff Association (GNUASA) received notice that 26 Contract Academic Staff (CAS) would not be re-appointed and had called a special membership meeting. I was in Group One that developed the collective agreement language response – though I knew nothing about it, the educational measure of this experience was astonishing. The last session involved the groups' presentations, which included both the practical accomplishments and a great deal of hilarity.

Not all who attended the conference were Contract Academic Staff: many were full-time, tenured Faculty. What I brought away from the conference were the possibilities for unity and respect that could be created among all ranks of academic workers. I would like to point out the strategies for creating alliances between contract and tenured Faculty developed by Dr. Sarika Bose in the Department of English at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Dr. Bose suggested awareness campaigns, paper-editing and CV groups for positive improvement, readings groups, professional development events which increase Part-Time Staff's visible identity as a community of scholars, colloquia, and publication displays. Dr. Bose's attitude of the necessity of facilitating alliances between all Faculty Members was refreshing but a bit daunting – if Contract Academic Faculty are to succeed in improving their circumstances, we need the help of tenured Faculty – and asking for help is always a humbling proposition.

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## Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund (AEFF) Society

by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer



Left to right: Dr. Mary Oxner, StFXAUT President and Dr. Clare Fawcett, StFXAUT Secretary, present a cheque for \$1,800 to Mr. Mike MacDonald, Chair of the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund (AEFF) photo credit: Susan MacKay

The Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund (AEFF) offers emergency financial support to individuals and households living on low incomes that are unable to pay the full cost of heating their homes during the winter season. As its name implies, the AEFF is a response to situations where people living on low incomes in the Town and County of Antigonish face an imminent threat of losing heat. This could include receiving a disconnection notice from the electric utility or running out of heating oil or wood. Applications are made through the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.

Growing concern around the issue of Heat Poverty led to the organization of a community-based Heat Poverty Initiative in Antigonish in September 2008. A committee was formed and the AEFF was launched on January 5, 2009. AEFF clientele are among the Town and County of Antigonish's poorest households. Approximately 400 households, representing 1300 people in Antigonish Town & County, report an annual income of less than \$15,000.

Half of the people are children. Last winter, the AEFF was able to assist 75 households.

An \$1,800 contribution from the StFXAUT to the AEFF was used to pre-order six loads of wood (\$300/load) for households seeking help with firewood. The timely donation of these funds ensured that the wood was removed from the woods before snow-fall and was dry when delivered.

Mike MacDonald, AEFF President communicated to *The Beacon* that the AEFF "welcomes the StFXAUT as a major sponsor, joining the Town, County, Sisters of St. Martha, and the East Coast Credit Union".

To learn more about the AEFF, including how to donate, please call Mike MacDonald at (902) 863-8737. To apply for help, please call (902) 863-6221.

## Acadian Forest and Farm School

A rather sizeable and motivated group of Antigonish educators, parents, children, and environmentalists have embarked on creating the first local community supported forest school (K- Grade 8), called the Acadian Forest and Farm School.

More information about this model can be gathered from The Child and Nature Alliance. If you are interested in the local school or the Alliance, please contact Dr. Riley Chisholm directly at [rchishol@stfx.ca](mailto:rchishol@stfx.ca).

## Reminders...

- The next deadline to submit the [StFXAUT Sponsorship Application Form](#) is **Sunday, April 1**. Please note that applications can be submitted any time before this deadline. The StFXAUT invites sponsorship requests from organizations committed to education, labour, social justice, and community development.
- The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) offers [Health and Dental Benefits for Retirees](#). To learn more about monthly premiums for residents of Nova Scotia, please [click here](#).
- StFXAUT social media activity is ongoing: follow [@StFXAUT](#) on Twitter and like our [Facebook](#) page, [www.facebook.com/StFXAUT](http://www.facebook.com/StFXAUT), to monitor goings-on.
- Please remember to send your event notices and campus updates to the StFXAUT list serve to keep all Members informed.

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## YOUR 2017-2018 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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## KEY DATES

Some of the upcoming deadlines in the [4th Collective Agreement](#) include:

### APRIL:

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#### April 1<sup>st</sup>:

- Requests for a twelve month extension to probationary period for those on pregnancy, adoptive, parental or sick leave for a period of at least 25 consecutive weeks. (**Article 4.4 Conditions of Employment:1.0**)

#### April 10<sup>th</sup>:

- Recipients of the Outstanding Teaching Awards to be notified. (**Article 2.7.1 University Research/Publication/Teaching Awards:4.8.1**)

#### April 15<sup>th</sup>:

- Applications for URPTA, based on research or publication, made to the appropriate Dean, at the Faculty Members' initiative due. (**Article 2.7.1 University Research/Publication/Teaching Awards:3.1**)

#### April 20<sup>th</sup>:

- The Outstanding Teaching Awards Committee shall notify, in writing, the Deans of Faculty of its selections. (**Article 2.7.1 University Research/Publication/Teaching Awards:4.9**)

### MAY:

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#### May 15<sup>th</sup>:

- Submission to the University Librarian by each Librarian of a copy of an Annual Report of professional activities. (**Article 3.3 Annual Report:1.0**)
- Deadline for performance evaluation of Lab Instructors (unless contract termination date is prior to May 15th. (**Article 4.6 Performance Evaluation:2.0**)

#### May 31<sup>st</sup>:

- The Chair /Coordinator informs each Faculty member in his/her department/IDP in writing of the Faculty Member's teaching assignment for the forthcoming Academic year. (**Article 2.0.2 Chairs of Departments, Coordinators of Interdisciplinary Programs and Assistant Director, School of Nursing:2.3 b**)
- Faculty Members who qualified for a sabbatical leave but the leave is not granted are required to send a letter to the Chair, appropriate Dean, and Chair of the University Council for Research (UCR) indicating revisions or updates to the sabbatical plan or withdrawal of the sabbatical application. (**Article 2.4.1 Sabbatical Leave:3.2**)

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE STFXAUT  
OFFICE:**

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[Email](#) • [Website](#)