



The Beacon

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The Beacon is an information bulletin for StFXAUT members

President's Message

Dear Members,

The summer at an Academic institution could be described by a set of oxymorons - restful productivity, flexible deadlines and engaged withdrawal, for examples. For the StFXAUT, the summer provides a time for reflection on priorities for the next Academic year, to work on our own administrative processes and infrastructure, and to support Members in the contexts in which they work. We remain engaged with provincial (Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers ([ANSUT](#))), regional (Atlantic Canada Council for Faculty Associations (ACCFA)) and national (Canadian Association of University Teachers ([CAUT](#))) organizations and also regularly engage in discussions with the other Unions on campus.

As we turn the calendar to the month of September, we reluctantly start to shake off summer, welcome back returning and new students, engage with new members in their various roles, recall the smell of school supplies we bought for elementary school and savour the taste of a new crisp apple.

This year and next may be characterized as years of disruption as we witness the building of the Mulroney Centre and teach out of newly reclaimed and repurposed spaces. As the disruption is temporary, we look forward to new learning spaces for many of our Members and our students. In the meantime, hopefully the transition to the new Academic year is smooth and the year ahead is a successful and meaningful one.

Mary O.
StFXAUT President

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Alumna Shout-out

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 Alexis MacDonald (Psychology '99 with First Class Honours).



The Beacon: During your time at X was there any 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?

Alexis: There are several StFX Professors and staff who had a major influence on my life decisions – I couldn't narrow it down to one:

Mary Coyle, former StFX Vice President and Director of the [Coady International Institute](#). I felt a deep affinity with Mary from the first day I met her. I was a young woman leader on the Students' Union and Mary gave me a lot of support in that role. She encouraged me to apply for the Coady's Youth Internship Program post-graduation, which irrevocably changed my life and career path towards international development. To this day, Mary is still my greatest mentor and has become a close friend.

Dr. Gary Brooks, my former History of Psychology Professor. He encouraged me to do my honours thesis in Psychology. Dr. Brooks was renowned for his intellect and high standards – he pushed me to become a better writer and a top student. He is now retired but I recently reconnected with him – he is as fabulous as ever.

Dr. Margo Watts, my former Personality Psychology Professor. I took a summer class with Dr. Watts and was blown away by her teaching style. She approached the material with such creativity and passion – it made me change my thesis focus from child development to personality psychology.

Dr. Sean Riley, former StFX President. Sean recognized my leadership skills early on and continuously encouraged me to take on new challenges. Every year, Dr. Riley and I find time to sit down for a deep conversation about life and career paths. How many University Presidents continue to do that with their former students, even years later?

Dr. Ann Bigelow, founder of [Service Learning](#) at StFX. I will never forget rushing into Dr. Bigelow's office, begging her to let me go on the Service Learning trip after missing the first deadline. Dr. Bigelow made a rare exception and that Service Learning experience was life changing. It inspired me to learn more about the injustices in the world - and the students I went on that trip with to Jamaica are still my closest friends almost 20 years later.

The Beacon: You recently visited Antigonish in November 2016. How often have you been back since you graduated? What's something that has strikingly changed since your time here? Is there anything that seems to have hardly changed at all?

Alexis: Antigonish is my second home. I lived in Antigonish for several years after university while I worked for the Coady International Institute. I go back as often as I can – at least once or twice a year. The significant change that I’ve seen over the years is just how much more integrated the University and the Antigonish have become – which I know didn’t happen overnight or without a lot of energy and thought. Antigonish is such a thriving community in its own right. I think the current students are much more aware of the town’s dynamism than we ever were twenty years ago.

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

Alexis: My older cousin Kim studied Phys. Ed at StFX. In my 12th year of high school, I made the big trek from PEI to visit her during her “whistle-blowing ceremony”. I was immediately sold. I was determined to study off Island and I loved StFX’s school spirit!

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

Alexis: I thought I might become a teacher, like both my parents, or a psychologist. I knew that I loved working with people and that I wanted to make a positive contribution. I also loved the academic setting so I was bent on pursuing my Masters and maybe even a PhD.

The Beacon: You're now living and working as the Director of External Relations at the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) - can you lead us along your path from Antigonish to the [Stephen Lewis Foundation](#)?

Alexis: After university, I put my academic pursuits on hold and spent six months on a Coady internship in Ghana, West Africa working for an environmental organization. From that moment on, I realized that I wanted to commit my life to social justice work. I had the opportunity to work for Canada World Youth in Jamaica and return to the Coady International Institute to run their Youth Internship Program. After a few years, I ended up working on a university-wide initiative called Xtending Hope, which supported Botswana and Rwanda in their efforts to respond to the AIDS crisis. It was through this university partnership that I met Stephen Lewis, who was then United Nations Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa. When I made the (brave? naïve?) decision at age 26 to represent the NDP federally in Central Nova, Stephen Lewis agreed to speak at my nomination meeting in Plymouth. After the election, I was surprised to get a call from Stephen Lewis out of the blue. I thought he might be calling me to say congratulations on the NDP finishing second for the first time in the history of the riding. Rather, he was calling to offer me a job as the Acting Executive Director of his new Foundation in Toronto that was focused on funding HIV/AIDS organizations in Africa. That was in 2004 – and I have been working for the Stephen Lewis Foundation in some iteration ever since! The Foundation has allowed me to develop skills in so many different areas – distributing grants, fundraising, organizing national events. The next major opportunity is organizing a book launch across the country. In the Fall, the Foundation will be publishing a book (with Goose Lane Editions) on the [Grandmothers Movement](#) which will feature heartbreaking and inspiring life stories from African and Canadian grandmothers, along with my photographs from eight sub-Saharan African countries. Stay tuned: www.stephenlewisfoundation.org!

The Beacon: Having worked with the SLF for many years, are there any key skills or ways of thinking about or doing development work that you learned while at StFX that you still make use of today?

Alexis: I was heavily influenced by the Coady International Institute's approach that is based on the core principle that communities are best positioned to lead their own development. The Coady recognizes that the expertise and capacity is found in the communities themselves and the greatest catalyst for transformation is through adult education – providing opportunities for community leaders to learn from each other. My time spent at the Coady made my transition to the Stephen Lewis Foundation feel like a natural fit as the SLF's approach is very similar. Founded on feminism, solidarity, and anti-oppression, the SLF exists to raise funds in Canada and send these resources directly to the grassroots organizations at the heart of the response to HIV & AIDS, primarily lead by women, grandmothers, and people living with HIV.

[The Stephen Lewis Foundation](#) is proud to announce the upcoming publication of ***Powered by Love: A Grandmothers' Movement to End AIDS in Africa***



Photographs by Alexis MacDonald

This is the untold story of AIDS in Africa.

We thought we knew what was happening in Africa when the AIDS pandemic raged across the continent, sweeping away 35 million lives. But we never knew it the way this book reveals it, in the shockingly intimate voices of the grandmothers who stepped in to raise their orphaned grandchildren when no one else was left alive.

A dynamic movement of grandmothers rallied in response. Starting in Canada and spreading across the globe, it now encompasses thousands of grandmothers on several continents. Together, resolute grandmothers in Africa and around the world are reclaiming hope and courageously saving lives. Their voices will leap straight into your heart. Their unguarded faces, in portraits that glow with character, pain, and humour, will captivate you.

Powered by Love reveals the compelling journey of these indomitable women and a movement that now reaches around the globe, sharing their story in their own words.

Royalties from sales of *Powered by Love* will be directed to the Stephen Lewis Foundation to support organizations run by and for African grandmothers who are raising children orphaned by AIDS.

Getting to Know You: The StFX Chemistry Department

by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer



Left to right: Pablo Scrosati and Tiffany Brooks (Honours students of Dr. Razul), Dean of Science Dr. Petra Hauf, MP for Central Nova Sean Fraser, Dr. Geniece Hallett-Tapley, Dr. Shah Razul, Bry Crabbe (Dr. Hallett-Tapley's MSc student), Oliver Kuehm (Dr. Hallett-Tapley's Honours student); photo credit: Susan MacKay

Small classroom sizes, individual opportunities like small and private lab spaces, and close, personalized instruction are among the benefits that the [StFX Department of Chemistry](#) have provided third year Honours student Oliver Kuehm. Kuehm extolled the benefits of what *The Beacon* assured him was a fairly rare occurrence, “With the profs coming to you ...you get to learn from a first-hand perspective what they're doing. You have a lot more knowledge before you get into a circumstance”.

Kuehm eventually accepted an invitation to work on a research project led by Assistant Professor [Dr. Geniece Hallett-Tapley](#) that is investigating light-induced reactions. Dr. Hallett-Tapley explained the research to me as “using light to promote reactions. Find[ing] things that are more environmentally friendly and kind of playing on the solar energy boom with the ultimate goal of using visible sunlight to promote these types of reactions. It's what we call photo-catalytic green chemistry”.

This is just one example of the interesting research projects being undertaken by the small but vibrant department. Over the last year, [Dr. Shah Razul](#) has been working on ways to better improve the preservation and freezing of lobster. *The News* recently [profiled](#) this work. According to Dr. Razul, lobster is the first step, and that once it is demonstrated, his “cryoprotectant formulation is better than anything else out there, then you can go to anybody...and, of course, once you have success with one system, you can extend it to other systems: there’s scallops, there’s crabs, there’s fish...ice cream. There’s no shortage of things”.

Dr. Razul noted that the department’s small size requires faculty to operate outside the academic silos typically found in larger institutes. This allows StFX researchers “to pursue a passion for scientific activity”. Dr. Hallett-Tapley also emphasized that the department, “pride[s] ourselves on the interdisciplinary collaborations. It’s just a completely different model of how the academic environment works”.

This collegial and collaborative atmosphere is a hallmark of the department. Department Chair Dr. James Cormier credits some of this spirit to the department’s size: “It’s hard to put your finger on. I think people just want to do a good job. I think we’re the right size department. It’s hard to have factions in a department that only has ten [Faculty] in it, I think everybody understands that they’re all needed, that it’s not going to work unless we all work together”. Dr. Cormier also credited the department’s five Lab Instructors, saying that “you could not run this place in any way without the Lab Instructors. They are great. They are also very helpful. They propose things. They have a lot of initiative”.

Working together allows the department to do the best with the relatively small amount of research funding available. Dr. Hallett-Tapley mentioned that “[o]ne of the ways we can all get around these funding pinches is, since we do have such a close-knit relationship, we can just go next door and say, ‘hey I have this idea and it might play on what your expertise is. What do you say we get together and try to do some work together?’. [T]hat’s a really common thing in our department”.

The Beacon asked Kuehm, what, as he prepares for his fourth and final year at X, is next? He shared that his “goal [his] entire life has been to go into med school. I’ve just written my MCAT”. While he’s not one hundred percent certain that medical school is the next step, he does want to “use this degree to enter a profession where I can help other people with my knowledge of science”.

Related Stories:

- [New research funding will create unique opportunities for StFX researchers and students](#)
- [Using light to charge a battery - research partnership between St. Francis Xavier University and Genair8 Technologies](#)
- [Chemistry professor receives invitation to contribute to two special journal issues](#)
- [Chemistry prof studying ways to keep frozen lobster fresh](#)
- [Canadian professor fishing for answers on preserving frozen lobster](#)
- [St. F.X. gets funding for study on chemicals made from light](#)

Federal government must invest in fundamental science

(Ottawa — 28 August, 2017) The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is calling on the federal government to invest in basic research in its next budget as the foundation for a diverse and inclusive society, an improved quality of life, and a strong economy. CAUT is urging the government to act on the recommendations of its Science Review panel and invest \$1.3 billion over 4 years.

“Their own review has shown that the government has to become a stronger partner on basic research,” said CAUT Executive Director David Robinson. “Canada is losing ground on science compared to other countries. Investing in research is investing in our future.”

CAUT’s [pre-budget submission](#) also makes recommendations to sustain Canada’s climate research networks, invest further in Indigenous education; strengthen employment equity programs, and increase federal transfers for post-secondary education.

“The next federal budget is a great opportunity for the government to show leadership and build a stronger, more resilient, and more inclusive Canada,” added Robinson. “To realize this vision it must boost investments in fundamental science and post-secondary education as the foundations for a better future”, added Robinson.

CAUT is the national voice of 70 000 teachers, librarians, researchers, general staff and other academic professionals in 122 post-secondary institutions across the country.

Let’s Get Science Right!

(Ottawa — 21 August, 2017) The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is launching a national campaign to call on the federal government to act on the recommendations of its Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science and invest in basic research.

“Canadians see the benefits of basic research every day. It saves lives, improves our understanding of the world, helps solve problems and strengthens our future,” said CAUT President James Compton. “Investing in scientific research is investing in our future.”

The Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science, chaired by David Naylor, delivered its report in April 2017. Its chief recommendation is to increase funding by \$1.3 billion over four years. The Panel noted that Canada has failed to keep pace with other countries and is losing opportunities to strengthen our knowledge and talent advantages.

“Over the next months, CAUT will encourage the government to adopt the recommendations of the Naylor Report, including its call to increase support for basic science,” added Compton.

To get involved in the campaign, visit <http://science.caut.ca>.

Science Literacy Week: September 18-24
A week-long celebration of science in Canada

To Eat an Almond

by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer



Left to right: Brendan Ahern and Majd Al Zhouri; photo credit: Janie Lundsén

On April 27, a year ahead of schedule and less than a month after reaching an earlier milestone of \$70,000, StFX for Syrian-Antigonish Families Embrace ([SAFE](#)) reached a fundraising goal of \$100,000. These funds will allow SAFE to sponsor another family of Syrian refugees.

During the April 27 fundraising event, 21-year old Majd Al Zhouri, one the first Syrians to arrive in Antigonish, performed his one-person play *To Eat an Almond*. The acclaimed play debuted on March 24 of this year during Theatre Antigonish's annual one-act play festival.

Other recent stagings include a performance before 150 teachers at Dr. John H. Gillis Regional High School during an April 28 In-Service Day, and a May 11 fundraiser at Glasgow Square

Theatre in New Glasgow for [Pictou County Safe Harbour Refugee Project](#). Majd also delivered a speech adapted from the play during the first national [Interchange Conference](#) held May 24-26 at StFX.

SAFE nominated Majd to the Vancouver Foundation's National Fresh Voices Artivism Award. According to their website, the [Fresh Voices Awards](#) are a recognition of "the leadership of newcomer youth who, in British Columbia and across Canada, are working to advance social change based on themes and priorities such as immigration, education, and cross-cultural dialogue". The Vancouver Foundation flew Majd and the two other finalists to Vancouver to attend the June 19 Fresh Voices Awards ceremony. SAFE funds made it possible for Majd's sister Ranim to accompany her brother. Majd ended up winning.

The Beacon recently spoke to Al Zhouri, his co-writer, StFX alumnus Brendan Ahern, and collaborator Lionel Doucette about how the origins of the play, its therapeutic benefits, and its success.



Left to right: Peter Flegel, Majd Al Zhouri, and Sajedah Zaki; photo credit: Invisionation Photography (Vancouver)

Shortly after arriving in Antigonish, Al Zhouri enrolled in an English as an Additional Language (EAL) program offered free of charge, through the Antigonish County Adult Learning Association ([ACALA](#)). Al Zhouri was asked by his instructor, ACALA Executive Director Lise De Villiers, to write about something he couldn't forget. This exercise resulted in a collection of writings, which Al Zhouri titled *Blood Memories*, that later became the foundation of *To Eat an Almond*.

Growing up in Syria, Al Zhouri spent little time writing and was never involved in the theatre. Nonetheless, in the fall of 2016, he was cast as Prince Amir in Theatre Antigonish's production of *The Ash Girl*. Acting was suggested to him as a means of improving his English and his self-confidence by StFX English Professor Joseph Khoury. This experience allowed Al Zhouri to, as he puts it, "discover the beauty of the theatre". Al Zhouri described the theatre as "a place to stay away from life's difficulties. You go there and you turn things off and go to a different world. I liked that experience and I started thinking of using theatre with my story".

During the staging of the *The Ash Girl* that Al Zhouri became better acquainted with Lionel Doucette. Doucette had been teaching English to a group of Syrian men recently arrived to Antigonish including Al Zhouri's father. Doucette, who has professional theatrical experience, was called in to assist Al Zhouri with his phrasing and later became involved with Al Zhouri and Ahern as they began transforming *Blood Memories* into a script. The three met shortly after Christmas 2016 to flesh out a play from *Blood Memories*. According to Ahern, they met "three times a week at the People's Place for a month" but the writing stalled. Ahern describes the challenges:

“At the very beginning the three of us agreed that, as soon as it doesn’t feel right, as soon as it feels as though it’s slipping into a direction that we’re not comfortable with ... we back off. It was hard. I was surprised in how open Majd was in talking in telling us these things. I thought it would be harder for him to talk; it ended up quite hard to listen to these stories.”

Early in 2017, Doucette was travelling and heard from Ahern and Al Zhouri that the play was shaping up. Earlier drafts which included sections on politics and history were set aside. Majd’s story became central. As he put it:

“Eventually we decided to do the story personal. I didn’t want to be talking about politics and all that stuff because it’s so complicated and the reason for this play was just me. I really wanted to tell the story and it’s the family story and my story and I really wanted to tell this story just to help myself deal with it. Help me move forward.”

The therapeutic aspect of the storytelling was significant. Al Zhouri had been struggling to communicate his pain. As he puts it, “I left Syria in 2013 to Lebanon and I lived there for three years. During those three years I didn’t talk about this and it’s all in me and it’s all traumatic in my head: sometimes nightmares, sometimes overthinking. So for three years I didn’t talk about it”.

Yet he needed to find a mechanism for releasing the pain that had accumulated over several years. Majd recalled attending therapy sessions accompanied by an interpreter and feeling frustrated that his impressions had to be filtered through an interpreter. In his words:

“Going to a doctor wasn’t working. My English wasn’t so good so I wasn’t able to explain to him all at pain. I didn’t want to tell my pain to a translator and then the doctor would be listening to the translator and not to me. I started looking for ways to tell my story and when I started writing, I felt different. My pain was on paper, but I felt more comfortable.”

Majd, who will begin studying engineering at StFX University this fall notes the therapeutic benefits provided by writing and performing of “To Eat an Almond” and how the challenges of university are not as daunting as they may have been a year ago: “I’m not going to forget. I’m just making space and leaving room for everything that life will bring me cause right now I’m building my future. Next year I’m in university and, you ... have to be, not empty from pain, but a little bit of space”.

“Blood Memories”, a collaboration between Madj and film director Peter Murphy, is being screened at the Antigonish International Film Festival on Saturday, October 28 beginning 9:00am on Saturday, October 28 in the Cineplex.

To learn more about SAFE, including how to donate, visit their [Facebook page](#).

The StFXAUT Breaking the Silence (BTS) Connection

by Philip Girvan, StFXAUT Communications Officer



Dr. Mary Oxner, StFXAUT President, presents a cheque to Breaking the Silence (BTS) members; front row (left to right): Wyanne Sandler, Mary Oxner, Justine Frame, and Amberlee Boulton; back row (left to right): Janette Fecteau, Clement Anson, and Coralie Cameron; photo credit: Susan MacKay

Remember, Resist and Thrive: Rooting Education in Indigenous Worldviews was a panel discussion hosted by the StFXAUT and Antigonish Breaking the Silence Guatemala Solidarity (BTS) on June 19. Three speakers from the [New Hope Community Bilingual Institute in Rabinal](#) -- School Director Sandra Lopez, current student Andrés Colucho Chachal, and Lilian Bolvito, a member of the first graduating class from the school's recently created technical program – shared the school's struggles and challenges, as well as their impressions of Nova Scotia, to a crowd gathered in the St. James United Church Community Room. The New Hope Community Bilingual Institute is a school dedicated to the local indigenous Maya Achi culture that teaches the Maya Achi language, community development, and the history of colonization and other injustices committed against indigenous peoples.

This discussion was only the most recent demonstration of solidarity between Antigonish and Guatemala. Antigonish businesses donated building materials and school supplies to the New Hope Community Bilingual Institute. Community members contributed financially and volunteered their labour to help build the school. Speakers from Guatemala travel to the Maritimes every year, and Antigonish is almost always a stop.

There are strong ties between the university and Guatemala as well. [StFX Immersion Service Learning](#) students visit the country each spring. Lisa Rankin and Jackie McVicar, the two current BTS coordinators, are StFX graduates. StFXAUT members sit on the Antigonish committee of BTS. For many years, StFX instructors have welcomed Guatemalan members of the BTS network to speak in Spanish, Political Science, History, and Sociology classes. The StFXAUT was instrumental in Jesús Tecú Osorio, a

survivor of the [1982 Río Negro Massacre](#), and the creator of the New Hope Foundation in 1997, receiving a Honourary Doctorate from StFX in 2007.

StFXAUT Member Janette Fecteau, an artist, writer, and instructor with the [Art Department](#), has been a BTS member since 1993. Janette recalls that Guatemalan-Antigonish solidarity took off following a visit by speakers from [Mamá Maquín](#), an indigenous feminist organization, to the Coady International Institute.

Kathryn Anderson, the organizer of the visit, connected Janette and others inspired by Mamá Maquín's talk with Project Accompaniment, an organization focused on accompanying persons who had been displaced during the Guatemalan Civil War (1960 to 1996). While this was happening, StFX alumnus Terry O'Toole (BA '69) was already accompanying refugees returning to Guatemala from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps in Mexico.

Terry had first visited Guatemala in 1974. Massacres were occurring regularly, but were not being reported by either the Guatemalan or the international press. Violence was overwhelmingly directed at indigenous communities. During the civil war, Guatemala was considered a 'no-go' zone for international non-governmental organizations. Terry recalls that anyone identified with an international NGO would be 'disappeared'. Things began to change in the 1990s. As Terry tells it:

In early 1993, I received a phone call from Kathryn Anderson at the Tatamagouche Centre [which] was part of a national network that included, among others, Development & Peace, CUSO, Oxfam and the United Church. Ms. Anderson was recruiting for Project Accompaniment (PA) [who] had made an exploratory trip in 1988 to Guatemala and to the UN refugee camps in Mexico. PA met with the Permanent Commissions (Spanish acronym: CCPP), who were the chosen representatives of the refugees in the camps. [This] was historic. Never, in the annals of refugee returns, have the refugees themselves negotiated the terms of their return independent of the UNHCR.

The negotiating table consisted of: the Permanent Commissions; COMAR – the Mexican government's refugee agency; UNHCR; the Guatemalan Catholic Church; the Mexican Diocese of Chiapas, under Bishop Samuel Ruiz; the Guatemalan military and the Guatemalan government. The most difficult issue was the military's tenacious refusal to allow international accompaniers to return with the refugees. Once this condition was agreed upon, the returns began, the first being in January of 1993.

In the mid-2000s, Antigonish Project Accompaniment evolved into a member committee of the Breaking the Silence Maritime Guatemala Solidarity Network. Though armed conflict is over, accompaniment continues. Janette explains, "[o]nce the returned communities were established and life post-peace accords was coming together ... there started to be court cases where people were bringing human rights crimes to justice in the court system in Guatemala. So there was a renewed need for accompaniment ... accompanying people who were complainants and witnesses to court cases". Accompaniers visit these people in their homes, to court, and to meetings with lawyers.

Besides providing physical safety, it is hoped that it helps to raise awareness of the Achi's plight.

An active BTS campaign called *Mining the Connections* focuses on Canadian mining companies' complicity in labour violations, illegal land appropriation, and environmental devastation. Wyanne Sandler, who has been involved with BTS in various capacities for over a decade, recalls the campaign's origin. A partner, scheduled to speak to a BTS delegation on another topic, told those gathered to "forget what I said I was going to talk about. We really need to talk about the fact that there are these Canadian mining companies that are wreaking havoc in our communities and, as Canadians, you need to be doing something. You need to hold these companies accountable or you need to talk about it in Canada".

BTS responded to the challenge. Canadian volunteers frequently accompany members of an affected community to mining companies' annual general meetings (AGMs) and pose questions to stakeholders regarding the activities taking place in their name. Divestment campaigns are underway. Some, such as the United Church of Canada's decision to divest from Goldcorp, have been successful. [Open For Justice](#), a global solidarity campaign, involving numerous partners, demands that the Canadian Government create an Ombudsperson for the Extractive Sector.

Regardless of the issue, the BTS solidarity model ensures that, as Janette puts it, "the direction comes from the South, whether this is expressed in physically accompanying refugees, witnesses, or impacted persons to shareholder meetings. Dialogue with the partners guide activities".

Direction may come from the South, but the knowledge exchange is two-way. The speakers at the June event shared how their recent trip to Eskasoni First Nation provided them with insights into historical and current injustices. Andres explained that he had not understood the extent of other indigenous peoples' sufferings prior to the visit. Sandra noted that the destruction of indigenous languages is common to peoples of the North as well as the South. She informed the crowd that the twenty-three oral languages indigenous to Guatemala are all given low priority by the Guatemalan State. These are not included in the national curriculum which emphasizes Spanish language indoctrination. Lilian was struck by similarities between Maya Achi and Mi'kmaq traditions: feathers being sacred objects, significant roles played by elders, and the concept of seven generation stewardship.

The next exchange between Antigonish and Guatemala involves [Guatemalan hip-hop artist named Rebeca Lane](#) who is expected to perform at StFX this October. Breaking the Silence is planning a human rights delegation to Guatemala in May 2018. To learn more, please visit their [website](#).

Save the Date: Tuesday, December 4th

*The Social Affairs Committee would like to invite you to an end of term brunch
on Tuesday, December 4th from 10:00am-11:30am
in the Keating Centre Conference Rooms.*

We hope you join us!

StFXAUT Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Session

by Suzanne van den Hoogen and Susan MacKay

One of four information sessions offered to AUT members during this year's StFXAUT Annual General Meeting (AGM) on May 11th was an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Session, hosted by Suzanne van den Hoogen, StFX Public Services Librarian and AUT JOHSC representative, and Susan MacKay, AUT Executive Assistant and JOHSC member (AUT alternate). The theme of our workshop was "Safety Starts with Me" and that each one of us is a safety leader.

We began by outlining the following goals of our workshop:

- 1) Awareness + education = the prevention of accidents and incidents,
- 2) Education = empowerment: Be familiar with the NS OHS Act and know your rights,
- 3) How to identify the six workplace hazards, and
- 4) What does safety in the workplace mean to you?

StFX's Safety Policy and Program was designed in accordance with the [Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (NS OHS Act), under which Employers have a legal obligation to "ensure the health and safety of persons at or near the workplace" as per Article 13 *Employer's precautions and duties*. Members were encouraged to become familiar with the Act.

Members were also introduced to the [StFX Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee \(JOHSC\)](#) website and shown where to access the [OHS Manual \(JOHSC\)](#) (revised May 11, 2016), the [StFX JOHSC Minutes, policies, legislation](#), and several [useful links and resources](#). The 25th anniversary of the Westray Mining Tragedy, which occurred May 9, 1992 was acknowledged at this time as well.

To illustrate the importance of adhering to safety issues, a short video, [Work Safe for Life – The Tape's Story](#), was provided.

The workshop focused on six workplace hazards:

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Physical | 4. Biological |
| 2. Mechanical | 5. Ergonomic |
| 3. Chemical | 6. Psycho-social |

Members were invited to consider OHS concerns within their various work environments. The following OHS concerns were identified:

Physical:

- Weather: snowstorms, snow accumulation, snow and ice removal.
- Cordoning off areas that are unsafe (e.g., icicles or accumulated snow on rooftops).
- Members asked who is responsible for communication.
- Slipping/tripping and stairs with risers.
- The elevators in Nicholson Hall need to be fixed.
- When the lights/power goes out, does a notice get sent out to the campus?
- Fume hoods are always on at different settings to make sure that any volatile chemicals under the fume hoods are always vented outside. A concern was that

sometimes fume hoods get shut off without any warning: who shuts them off and why aren't the Members who have labs informed about the shutting off of these fume hoods? Who should this be reported to and what is the timeline for repairs?

- Communication and awareness with all future construction: a clear reporting process with timelines, proper signage, and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), which are emailed to the campus community.
- Are first aid kits checked regularly and supplies replenished, and by whom?
- Building assessments: follow-up and documentation.
- Chemical reporting: are all incidents reported?
- Floor tiles torn/chipped and old carpet removed.
- A request was made to remove the carpet in the Biology Department Chair's Office.

Mechanical:

- Residue in coffee carafes due to coffee machines being left on without any water. Is there a budget for departments to buy coffee pots with emergency shut off valves to prevent this?

Chemical:

- Clean equipment in food labs and follow sanitation procedures.
- Awareness about using bleach in labs.
- Lab safety training and resources.
- Is there is a mechanism for inspecting labs in JBB?
- Is there a chemical checklist?

Biological:

- More reporting and compliance.
- Preparing for bio-terrorism, pandemics, and diseases.
- Food safety courses for those who work in labs.
- Fridge safety: cleaning out old food.
- Hand washing posters in all washrooms.
- Members asked that more hand sanitizers be placed throughout campus and who to contact to order more sanitizers as well as who pays for them.
- Microscope lenses cleaned regularly (to avoid pinkeye).

Ergonomic:

- Members asked about the timeline, process, and cost for ergonomic assessments and were advised to contact Janet Beaton, StFX Health & Safety Advisor, at jrbeaton@stfx.ca or (902) 867-5038. Each department pays for the required ergonomic equipment.
- Is there backup lighting everywhere on campus during power outages?
- The LED lights in JBB are too intense and cannot be dimmed (there is not a way to control the brightness of these lights).
- There needs to be more ergonomic support and awareness on campus.

Psycho-social:

- Stress, bullying, violence, and anxiety.
- Members asked about the reporting process for psycho-social concerns.

In our final slide, we presented an image of a kitchen and discussed the safety hazards.

We then asked Members to consider the following questions about their workspaces:

- Could you trip over cords, open filing cabinet drawers, or other objects?
- Are items secured or could they fall?
- Do you have adequate lighting for your eyes?
- How is your air quality?
- Is there any mold in your work environment?
- Have you received proper training to operate equipment?
- Is your mouse positioned correctly for your wrist?
- Are your feet on the floor or do you have a footrest?
- How can you make your workspace safer?

When asked if there were any additional comments or suggestions, Members brought forth additional concerns:

- 1) Not having breaks in the Lab Instructor's (LI) schedules during the day. There needs to be time and training allocated for new Lab Instructors and breaks must be built into their schedules.
- 2) Members stressed that there needs to be clearer communication, such as central reporting, expected timelines, and follow-up communication about incidents and construction projects.
- 3) Internal listservs be created for each building to improve communication.

We would like to thank everyone who attended our workshop for their valuable input and commitment to making our campus community a safe one for all. This report will be presented at the next JOHSC meeting in September, 2017.

We invite you to contact us with your safety concerns to ensure they are brought to the attention of the StFX JOHSC. Best wishes for a safe and healthy Academic year!

StFXAUT AGM OHS Info Session Presentation (May 11, 2017)

OHS Resources:

- [Can you spot the hazards? Poster](#)
- [Canada's National Health and Safety Website](#)
- [Canada's National WHMIS Portal](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Health and Safety \(CCOHS\)](#)
- [Canadian Institutes for Health Research](#)
- [Free E-Learning Courses Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety \(CCOHS\)](#)
- [Labour Standards in Canada](#)
- [National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#)
- [North American Occupational Health and Safety Week \(NAOSH\)](#)
- [Nova Scotia Labour and Advanced Education](#)
- [Nova Scotia Workplace Health and Safety Regulations](#)
- [Province of Nova Scotia Westray Mine Public Inquiry](#)
- [Workers Health and Safety Centre](#)
- [Workplace Bullying Institute](#)
- [Workplace Violence Prevention Strategy for Nova Scotia](#)
- [Your Rights, Responsibilities, and the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

2017 Antigonish International Film Festival: October 26th – 28th

The StFXAUT is very pleased to co-sponsor the following films in this year's Film Festival:

"Black Code"

(2016) 90 min.

Director: Nicolas de Pencier
An investigation of the impact of the internet on free speech, privacy, and activism.

Date: Saturday, October 28

Time: 1:30pm-2:30pm

Viewing location: Town Hall

"Blood Memories"

(2017) 16 min.

Director: Peter Murphy
A young Syrian refugee in Antigonish acts in a community theatre role that is eerily similar to his own life story.

Date: Saturday, October 28

Time: 9:00am-9:30am

Viewing location: Cineplex

"Dolores"

(2017) 98 min.

Director: Peter Bratt
Co-founder with Cesar Chavez of the National Farm Workers' Association, Dolores Huerta's lifelong advocacy for equality and justice.

Date: Saturday, October 28

Time: 2:50pm-4:30am

Viewing location: Library

The StFXAUT has proudly sponsored the Antigonish International Film Festival since 2008, and has been one of the major sponsors since 2013.

Reminders...

→ Each Academic year, the StFXAUT sponsors **Student Bursaries** for undergraduate students with demonstrable financial need. In your conversations with students, please remind them of this possibility. The deadline to submit an application for this bursary is **Wednesday, September 27th**.

→ The next deadline to submit the **StFXAUT Sponsorship Application Form** is **Sunday, October 1st**. The StFXAUT invites sponsorship requests from organizations committed to education, labour, social justice, and community development.

→ **Fair Employment Week: October 23-27. Make it fair for academic staff.** Campus events will be announced once they are confirmed.

→ The Antigonish Staples has set up a Business Development Program for Members of the StFXAUT. As an AUT Member, you are eligible for an ongoing 10% discount for the majority of printing services, which include poster printing, lamination, binding, and copying (not self-serve).

→ 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, to monitor goings-on.

→ Please remember to send your event notices and campus updates to the StFXAUT listserv to keep all Members informed.

2017 StFXAUT Book Prize Award

by Susan MacKay

The StFXAUT would like to congratulate the 2017 Book Prize Award recipients Emily Pipes (BA Psychology) and Emily Keenan (BA Political Science with First Class Honours with Subsidiary in Philosophy).



Left photo: Emily Pipes and Dr. Norine Verberg (Sociology); right photo: Emily Keenan and Dr. Jeffrey Spring (Political Science); photo credit: Susan MacKay

Each student was presented with cash award of \$200 and [*The Right to Be Cold*](#) (2015) by Sheila Watt-Cloutier.

The StFXAUT Book Prize is awarded at Spring Convocation to two graduating students who demonstrate a commitment to social justice advocacy and community development on campus or in the community.

Congratulations Emily and Emily! We wish you the very best in your future endeavours!

Your 2017-2018 StFXAUT Executive Committee

[Mary Oxner](#), President
[Bruce Sparks](#), Vice President
[Brad Long](#), Past President
[Clare Fawcett](#), Secretary
[Martin van Bommel](#), Treasurer
[Ken MacAulay](#), Co-Chief Grievance Officer

[Stephen Finbow](#), Co-Chief Grievance Officer
[Karen Kenny](#), Member at Large
[Kris Hunter](#), Member at Large
[Martin Sastri](#), Member at Large
[Monica Lent](#), Member at Large

The StFXAUT Executive Committee would like to extend a warm welcome to new and returning AUT members, students, and staff to our campus community, and wish each of you an engaging and successful academic year!

Key Dates

Some of the upcoming deadlines in the [*Fourth Collective Agreement*](#) include:

October 1st:

- Deadline for Academic Dossier for those being considered for renewal of probationary appointment, tenure and/or promotion. **(Article 2.1.6 Academic Tenure:3.0), (Article 2.2.3.1 Evaluation of Faculty Members Holding Probationary Appointments:4.0) (Article 2.2.3.2 Evaluation of Faculty Seeking Tenure:3.0)**

October 15th

- Deadline for Librarians to notify of intention to apply for advancement in rank. **(Article 3.1.5 Advancement in Rank:2.0)**

October 31st:

- Deadline for Faculty Members, who were employed by the University in the previous Academic year, to submit an electronic copy of an Annual Report of Activities. **(Article 2.0.1 Faculty Responsibilities:7.0, 7.1)**

November 1st:

- Deadline for the Departmental Evaluation Committee to submit its written evaluative report to the Dean and to the Faculty member being evaluated. **(Article 2.2.3.1 Evaluation of Faculty Members Holding Probationary Appointments:5.0) (Article 2.2.3.2 Evaluation of Faculty Seeking Tenure:4.1) (Article 2.2.3.2 Evaluation of Faculty Seeking Tenure:4.2) (Article 2.2.3.3 Evaluation of Faculty Members Seeking Advancement in Rank:3.1)**
- Deadline for Librarians seeking renewal or advancement in rank to apply, in writing, to the Chair of the Librarian Promotion and Assessment Committee. **(Article 3.1.5 Advancement in Rank:3.0) (Article 3.1.5 Advancement in Rank:4.0) (Article 3.1.6 Permanent Appointment:5.0) (Article 3.2.3.1 Evaluation of Librarians Holding a Probationary Appointment:4.0)**

November 2nd:

- Deadline for Members engaged in external employment to inform their Department Chair and Dean, of the nature and time devoted to these activities in the previous Academic year. **(Article 2.8 Outside Professional Activity:10.0)**

November 15th:

- Deadline for Academic Vice-President and Provost to give final approval of sabbaticals. **(Article 2.4.1 Sabbatical Leave:14.5) (Article 3.4.1 Sabbatical Leave:14.4)**
- Deadline for Librarians to ensure his or her Academic Dossier is complete. **(Article 3.1.6 Permanent Appointment:3.0)**

November 21st:

- Deadline for Nurse Educators on probationary contracts to submit a file to the Probationary Review Committee. **(Article 5.4 Probationary Appointments:10.0)**
- Deadline for Nurse Educators to submit a file to the Performance Evaluation Committee. **(Article 5.5 Performance Evaluation:4.0)**

December 1st:

- Deadline for the Librarian Evaluation Committee to submit its written evaluative report and recommendation to the University Librarian and to the Librarian being evaluated. **(Article 3.2.3.1 Evaluation of Librarians Holding a Probationary Appointment:5.0)**

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

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Email: stfxaut@stfx.ca • Website: <http://stfxaut.ca/>