

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

As we near the end of any year, we often reflect on what transpired during that year. In 2016, we successfully negotiated our [4th Collective Agreement](#), engaged numerous committees to work on issues which affect our Members, supported our Members through some difficult situations and participated in dialogues at both national and regional levels.

Our *4th Collective Agreement* was signed on December 14th, 2016. Consequently, we will require a number of committees to implement various Letters of Understanding (LOU's) attached to that Agreement and to continue the existing work of the StFXAUT. At the beginning of 2017, we will be asking for your input on a number of topics and for your participation on committees which will have a direct impact on our Members' workload and working conditions.

As an Association, we are very fortunate and thankful to have many engaged and effective Members working in collaboration.

Have a restful and joyous Holiday Season.
Mary O.

OUR CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to the organizers and volunteers on the 10th anniversary of the [Antigonish International Film Festival](#) (AIFF)! Over the past ten years, the Film Festival has shown more than 300 films to an audience of over 14,300.

The 2016 Antigonish International Film Festival took place from October 21-24. The StFXAUT was very pleased to sponsor the following films: [*The Bad Kids*](#), highlighting extraordinary educators teach love, empathy, and life skills to at-risk students; and [*Human*](#), a beautiful, wide-ranging, and deeply moving exploration of what makes us human.

The StFXAUT has sponsored the AIFF since 2008, and has been one of the major sponsors since 2013.

To stay informed about the Antigonish International Film Festival, [sign up for the latest news](#) to receive updates.



StFX jazz students performing at Immaculata Hall; photo credit Devon Chisholm

GETTING TO KNOW YOU: THE STFX MUSIC DEPARTMENT

by Philip Girvan

The [headline](#) at the top of the “About” section of the StFX website informs visitors that “StFX is known for the quality of our teaching, small class sizes creating an intimate and collaborative learning environment, and our valuable hands-on learning and research opportunities for undergraduates”. The [StFX Music Department](#) is an example of these priorities in practice.

Despite a relative short history (1978: Jazz Diploma established; 1983: Bachelor of Arts Honours Jazz degree, the first four-year jazz degree in Canada, established; 1990: Bachelor of Music Honours jazz degree established), the many awards, grants, scholarships, publications, record deals, invitations to perform at showcased concerts, and other recognitions received by StFX Music faculty, graduates, and students speak to the quality of the instruction, as well as the dedication and talent of those involved.

Alumni credit StFX professors and instructors with helping them to develop solid practice habits, to prepare for music careers, to send their compositions to publishing houses, and helping prepare them for graduate studies. Breagh MacKinnon, an accomplished performing and recording artist based in Halifax, is a graduate of the Jazz Studies, Bachelor of Music Studies (Honours) 2014. MacKinnon informed *The Beacon* that the “four years spent at StFX allowed me to develop and hone skills in performance, composing and arranging, that I now use on a day to day basis”. MacKinnon joins other Alumni in emphasizing the intimacy of the Jazz Studies program, stating that, “the small class sizes, and one on one attention from the professors gave me the ability to focus on the areas that I was interested in”. Jake Hanlon, who graduated with a Bachelor of Music, and is now teaching faculty at StFX, noted: “the biggest strength that we have, as I experienced it from both ends, is the one on one instruction”.

In addition to small classes and one on one instruction, graduates emphasize the department's camaraderie and collegial atmosphere. Greg Sykes, a 2016 graduate, told *The Beacon* that “[w]hile the instructors are fantastic, the most I learned in the music program was working with other musicians who were better than me...spending long hours not just playing music but discussing theoretical aspects of music, analyzing music, [and] listening music together”. Hanlon notes that this sense of community and intimacy is a huge draw:



StFX Jazz Faculty member Kevin Brunkhorst and students performing at Holland College; photo submitted by Greg Syke

Go to StFX, you're going to be surrounded by other tenor saxophonists, and alto saxophonists, and pianists and bassists and singers and drummers and guitarists, and they're listening to the same music you are and you're around them all day. And that sense of community is like pouring gasoline onto a fire and the students who are super passionate about it, they're here in the morning and they're at night, and they're in the listening library checking out music and they're coming here knocking on doors on they're asking profs questions and they're excited every semester when they have a new class. You can't have that anywhere else.

Those who spoke to *The Beacon* emphasized that, in addition to being close, the community is extremely welcoming. Upon arriving at StFX, Sykes recalled meeting:

like-minded individuals both passionate about music and hav[ing] this drive to work hard, support each other, share information...when [he] first got here [he] would go to the third floor of Gilmora, which is all practice rooms, [and meet] a small tight-knit group of musicians who were very keen on engaging with the new group of students. Once that started...you're constantly talking about ideas; you're constantly trying to push each other to be the best musician and the best student that you can be. That was the kind of atmosphere I jumped into at StFX.

Other alumni testimonials can be found on the Music Department's StFX Music Alumni [webpage](#). The [Events](#) page notes upcoming performances.



Dr. David Chiasson; photo courtesy of University of Munich (LMU) website

ALUMNI SHOUT-OUT

by Russell Wyeth

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 Dr. David Chiasson (BSc '01):

The Beacon: You recently visited Antigonish during Homecoming 2016. How often have you been back since you graduated?

David Chiasson: I grew up in Antigonish County, so I've visited Antigonish at least once every two years since graduation in 2001. Now that we have two children, we are trying to get back as often as we can.

The Beacon: What's something that has strikingly changed since your time here?

David Chiasson: The Campus! The transformation of the infrastructure is overwhelming. There are so many beautiful buildings it's difficult to point to one. On my latest visit I was impressed with the new School of Nursing facilities in the renovated Mount Saint Bernard residence.

The Beacon: Anything that seems to have hardly changed at all?

David Chiasson: The people. It is a pleasure to come back to campus and meet up with former professors and colleagues as if I just left (even though it has been 15 years!).

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

David Chiasson: I chose StFX based upon its reputation and location. Having grown up in Antigonish, it was an easy decision to choose the top undergraduate university in Canada.

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

David Chiasson: After getting a taste for research in the Department of Biology, becoming a professor was my new career.

The Beacon: You're now living and working in Germany - can you lead us along the path from Antigonish to Munich?

David Chiasson: Following graduation from StFX in 2001, I did an MSc at Queen's University in Kingston, ON working on plant-pathogen interactions. After taking a few years off to pursue an alternative career building Timber Frame houses, I completed a PhD at the University of Adelaide in Australia working on the legume-rhizobia nitrogen fixation symbiosis. I then moved to Munich, Germany to continue with postdoctoral

research. I am now serving as an interim professor at LMU in Munich, and I am hoping to return to Canada in the near future.

The Beacon: During your time at X was there any particular person (or people) who was (were) particularly inspiring or helpful? Someone that influenced your career path?

David Chiasson: I worked with David Garbary, Tony Miller, Moira Galway, and Randy Lauff, who were instrumental in whetting my appetite for experimental research. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to spend a summer in South Korea during my honours degree with Dr. Garbary.

The Beacon: What were the research projects that you worked on at StFX? [audience is broad - not necessarily scientists]

David Chiasson: I worked on a project that focused on a symbiosis between brown algae (kelp) and small filamentous red algae. We found that the kelp exuded tannic compounds into the ocean which protected the red alga from harmful UV radiation in shallow waters. In return, the red alga served as a host for germinating kelp spores. Having the work published in an international journal was instrumental in securing subsequent funding for my doctorate degree.

The Beacon: What about now, in Germany?

David Chiasson: My research now focuses on the symbiotic relationship between legume plant roots and nitrogen-fixing soil bacteria (rhizobia). Legumes thrive in the absence of nitrogen fertilizer due to their ability to associate with rhizobia. Since nitrogen fertilizer production consumes a large amount of fossil fuels and pollutes the environment, legumes are an essential component of sustainable agriculture.

The Beacon: Having been around the world now with research, are there any key skills or ways of thinking about or doing science that you learned in the Biology Department that you still make use of today?

David Chiasson: My time in the Biology Department instilled a curiosity about nature, especially plants and their interaction with the environment. The diversity of courses offered enabled us to observe organisms in their natural setting as well in a controlled laboratory atmosphere. Most of all it was the infectious enthusiasm of the professors and instructors that propelled me into academia.



FAIR EMPLOYMENT WEEK AT STFX

by Martin Sastri

Fair Employment Week is an annual campaign promoted by the Canadian Association of University Teachers. Taking its origins from a state-wide mobilization of instructors at

community colleges in California,¹ Fair Employment Week has grown to become an annual week of activism highlighting the unfair working conditions of contract academics (also known, variously, as Part-Time Instructors and Limited Term Appointments), in post-secondary institutions throughout the world. Fair Employment Week takes place in the last week of October.

Here at St. FX, the AUT Executive formed an ad-hoc committee to coordinate our local Fair Employment Week activities. This committee consisted of regular faculty members, as well as Part-Time Instructors, and received invaluable support throughout from the AUT's Executive Assistant, Susan MacKay. The committee began by drafting an open letter to President Kent MacDonald, noting that Part-Time Instructors are an integral part of the student experience at St. FX, and yet these same Instructors are paid minimally and have no real job security. The letter closed by welcoming the opportunity – provided by the pertinent Letter of Understanding in the recently ratified 4th *Collective Agreement* – to determine with the University Administration how to bring true job security to Part-Time Instructors. This letter was sent to Dr. MacDonald and distributed to the AUT mailing list on Monday, October 24th.

On the following Wednesday and Thursday, October 26th to 27th, the committee set up a Fair Employment Week table in the lobby of Nicholson Hall. The table carried a banner, identifying the AUT's commitment to Fair Employment Week, and both regular faculty and Part-Time Instructors staffed the table, distributed information about Part-Time working conditions at the university, and collected signatures for the national campaign to commit to fair and full employment for all university teachers.

The response to the Fair Employment week table was overwhelmingly positive. Students, in particular, made a ready connection between the hardships of teaching Part-Time at St. FX and the economic constraints limiting their own job prospects upon graduation. It was also gratifying for Part-Time Instructors to emerge from the invisibility that hides their working conditions on campus, and to speak in a relatively open manner about inequalities. Speaking from within a common cause, these conversations with students proved to be some of the most rewarding interactions during Fair Employment Week.

There were also many positive interactions with regular faculty members, some of whom had previously held non-permanent appointments of one kind or another. One interesting aspect of these encounters was the variety of solutions proposed by faculty members. For example, several faculty members suggested that the lack of progress made relative to Part-Time Instructor concerns is a result of not having a separate bargaining unit specific to Part-Time Instructors. Other faculty members wholeheartedly endorsed the inclusion of Part-Time Instructors within the larger Association, indicating that the last strike was in part intended to improve Part-Time working conditions. Above all, it was clear that fairly and fully employing all teaching staff was not a challenge faculty could conquer in a couple of days.

The success of this year's Fair Employment Week at St. FX was immensely encouraging. Notwithstanding, this should be taken as a mere beginning to more ambitious campaigns and feats of activism. Following the last round of contract negotiations, Part-Time Instructors received a negligible increase in stipend and no improvement with respect to job security. Part-Time Instructors are still the most poorly paid and least secure teaching staff at St. FX, and for these reasons the goals of Fair Employment Week need to be prioritized and publicized throughout the year.

¹ For a brief history, see <http://www.campusequityweek.org/CampusEquityWeek/history.htm>

CAUT LIBRARIANS' & ARCHIVISTS' CONFERENCE (October 21-22, 2016)

by Suzanne van den Hoogen

Academic Librarians represent a unique group within the academy. Like our faculty colleagues, we face many of the same workplace challenges – from basic conditions of employment to equity, research, teaching, professional development, and academic freedom. Additionally, academic librarians across the country are being confronted with the continued de-professionalization of their careers through the hiring of non-librarians for positions traditionally held by librarians and archivists.

Clearly these are challenging times for higher education - a tsunami of change, if you will. Government funding in support of post-secondary education across the country is stagnating, tuition costs are rising, and student enrollment is declining. Complements of academic librarians are also declining, resulting in increased workloads for those who remain. More often than ever before, we are being asked to do more with less. **Collective bargaining is an effective way to confront these issues and to make an impact at the negotiating table.**

The Canadian Association of University Teachers invited librarians and archivists from across the country to convene for a two-day specialized conference on collective bargaining in Ottawa, ON from October 21-22, 2016. Through a series of presentations and personal narratives, we were provided with an overview of collective bargaining and bargaining skills. The conference concluded with a day-long bargaining simulation.

Key points that I noted from this conference include the following:

Bargaining Basics

- Be prepared
- Know the law
- Know your Collective Agreement
- Keep your membership engaged
- Solidarity: Together we are stronger

Bargaining Skills

- Team Structure: Chief Negotiator, Note Taker(s), Numbers Person(s)
- Communication is crucial during negotiation
- Establish protocols for reporting
- Strategize on how decisions will be made
- Use caucusing as a tool

The most important message, however, that I took from this conference was about **respect** - respect for all parties at all times. There is no room at the negotiation table for egos. I left the conference with a newfound appreciation for all those who have negotiated on our behalf in the past, and for all those who will negotiate for us in the future. I wish to extend my sincerest thanks to the StFXAUT for sponsoring me to attend this conference.

IN SUPPORT OF STFX FOR SAFE



On November 9, on behalf of the StFXAUT Executive Committee, President Dr. Mary Oxner (right), presented two cheques, each in the amount of \$3,000, to StFX for SAFE Committee members, Cindy Murphy (left), Senior Lab Instructor, and StFX for SAFE Student Society President, Kristian Rasenberg (middle).

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT STFX FOR SAFE:

If you are able to make a private donation to the local SAFE Society (CRA Charitable Number 80994 5561), please follow the instructions below:

- 1) Send an email bank transfer to safamiliesembrace@gmail.com from your online banking site. This requires sending a second email with the answer to the security question, as required for this type of transaction.
- 2) Mail a cheque to SAFE, 204 Kirk Place, 219 Main Street, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, B2G 2C1.

Please note the StFX for SAFE campaign and provide your address if you would like an income tax receipt (provided for donations over \$20). Please donate as generously as you can – the need is great!

To learn more about the significant success of StFX for SAFE since its inception one year ago, please read the letter on the following page from the members of the StFX for SAFE Committee.



Peace for Syria



A year ago, Xaverians set out to raise funds for *Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace*, one of three local groups set up to help settle Syrian refugees. In our first year, we raised \$50,000. It is attached to a SAFE sponsorship application for a family living in a UN refugee camp. Since September more than \$10,000 more has been raised.

Thanks to tremendous local outreach and generosity, and the ambitious federal Syrian sponsorship initiative, six Syrian families now live in Antigonish town & county.

Sadly, the Syrian conflict continues. More than 11 million Syrians are displaced inside and outside Syria. The death toll has surpassed 400,000, with 50,000 children among the lives lost. UN initiatives for peace have gone nowhere and little is being done to help Syrians trapped in war zones. For these reasons, *StFX for SAFE* is promoting *Peace for Syria* this year. We encourage you to consider signing our online petition at: <https://www.change.org/p/justin-trudeau-give-peace-a-chance-in-syria>



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS (CAUT)
STATEMENT ON DECEMBER 6

(Ottawa—December 6, 2016) On this *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women*, we remember the École Polytechnique massacre, where 14 women were murdered in Montreal in 1989 because they were women. CAUT and its members stand strong against any form of violence women experience in their lives.

Last year, the federal government launched a much needed national investigation into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in our country. We hope this national effort will lead to solutions on the road to reconciliation with the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people.

Many more concrete actions need to be taken to address violence against women in Canada. Research shows that 51% of Canadian women under the age of 16 experience at least one incident of sexual or physical assault and that young women under the age of 25 experience the highest incidence of intimate partner violence.

We need to address the gender-based violence on our campuses through education and prevention. Employers, unions, advocates and governments must work together to develop good policy and provide services to victims of violence.

**THE STFXAUT STANDS WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA FACULTY
ASSOCIATION (UMFA)**

by Susan MacKay

In support of and in solidarity with our colleagues at the [University of Manitoba Faculty Association](#) (UMFA), the StFXAUT donated \$1,000 as a demonstration of that support during the Association's 21-day strike. Some of UMFA's central concerns include workload protection and the establishment of workload guidelines, more effective collegial governance, potential misuses of performance metrics, responsibility-based budgeting, and a recognition of fundamental equality among UMFA Members.

Funded by the [CAUT Defence Fund](#), former StFXAUT President and CAUT Chair of Academic Freedom & Tenure, Dr. Peter McInnis, attended a flying picket on Friday, November 4th in solidarity with our colleagues at UMFA, representing the members of the StFXAUT.

The StFXAUT contributes monthly dues to the Defence Fund, which provides Canadian academic unions with a unified strike fund and financial support, including strike pay and coverage for mediation and arbitration costs, while its members are engaged in a strike or a lock-out and experiencing a loss of salary.

Dr. Bob Zecker is the Defence Fund Trustee for the StFXAUT.

REMINDERS

- The next deadline to submit the [StFXAUT Sponsorship Application Form](#) is **Saturday, April 1st**. The StFXAUT invites sponsorship requests from organizations committed to education, labour, social justice, and community development.
- Please remember to send your event notices and campus updates to the StFXAUT list serve to keep all members informed.

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Thank you to Social Affairs Committee members Charlie ten Brinke, Deb Graham, and Bhavik Parikh for organizing a family hiking event at the Keppoch on Saturday, October 15th and a festive year-end gathering for AUT members on Monday, November 28th.

YOUR 2016-2017 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

[Mary Oxner](#), President

[Bruce Sparks](#), Vice President

[Brad Long](#), Past President

[Clare Fawcett](#), Secretary

[Martin van Bommel](#), Treasurer

[Charlene Weaving](#), Chief Grievance Officer

[Kris Hunter](#), Member at Large

[Martin Sastri](#), Member at Large

[Monica Diochon](#), Member at Large

[Wendy Panagopoulos](#), Member at Large

The StFXAUT Executive Committee extends their warmest wishes to you and your family for a joyous holiday season and a very Happy New Year!



ANNOUNCEMENT

The StFXAUT Executive is pleased to announce that the [St. Francis Xavier Association of University Teachers Bursary](#) was awarded to two undergraduate students in October. Each bursary is equal to the cost of one six-credit course, \$1,610.00.

Remember to access your Professional Development Fund (PDF)...
Article 1.22 of the Collective Agreement entitles each member to an expense account, against which you can claim for reimbursement of PD-related expenses:

[PDF Information](#) • [PDF Expense Claim Form](#)

Some examples include: Travel, iPads, laptops, software, professional registration fees, conference fees, and graduation robes.

SOME KEY DATES AND DEADLINES IN THE [FOURTH COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT](#):

January 1st:

- Members electing the Phased-In Retirement Option must apply in writing to the AVP no later than **January 1** of the year in which they wish to commence a phased-in retirement. Phased-in retirement options shall commence on July 1. (**Article 2.5.2 Phased-in Retirement Option:1.2 & Article 3.5.2 Phased-in Retirement Option:1.2**)

January 15th:

- The Dean shall communicate the decision to the department normally by October 1 in the case of tenure track replacements or appointments and **January 15** in the case of limited term replacements or appointments. (**Article 2.1.1 Recruitment and Appointment Procedure:3.2**)
- Such notice shall be given by **January 15**. (**Article 3.1.7 Renewal of a Probationary Appointment:3.3**)
- The Librarian Promotion and Assessment Committee shall make its recommendation regarding the grant of permanent appointment to the President by **January 15**. (**Article 3.2.3.2 Evaluation of Librarians Seeking Permanent Appointment:7.0**)

January 21st:

- The Dean shall forward the external referees' letters to the Chair of the Rank and Tenure Committee for the Committee's use. The Chair of the Rank and Tenure Committee will forward a copy of the external referees' letters for which the signature line and all personal identifiers are redacted to the relevant Departmental Evaluation Committee (or equivalent) and the Candidate by **January 21st**. (**Article 2.2.3.3 Evaluation of Faculty Seeking Advancement in Rank:7.2 External Referees e**)

January 30th:

- The Dean shall communicate his or her decision in writing to the candidate by **January 30** with reasons for the decision. (**Article 5.4 Probationary Appointments:15.0**)

January 31st:

- Employees who wish to retire shall provide, to the Academic Vice-President & Provost, Dean or Director, notice by **January 31** of their intent to retire between May 1 and June. For Faculty, it is understood that there will be no effective dates during the Fall or Winter Teaching Terms. (**Article 1.14 Retirement:2.0**)
- The meeting shall occur by **January 31**. (**Article 2.2.3.1 Evaluation of Faculty Members Holding Probationary Appointments:7.0**)
- A Faculty member electing early retirement will notify the Academic Vice-President and Provost to this effect by **January 31** preceding the academic year during which the early retirement will commence. (**Article 2.5 Retirement from University:1.4**)
- Employees must notify their intent to pursue this program on or before **January 31** of the year they reach the eligibility criteria, with a retirement date on July 1. (**Article 2.5.1 Retirement Allowance:3.0**)
- The deadline for the receipt of nominations by the Outstanding Teaching Awards Committee shall be **January 31**. (**Article 2.7.1 University Research/Publication/Teaching Awards:4.5**)
- The meeting shall occur by **January 31**. (**Article 3.2.3.1 Evaluation of Librarians Holding a Probationary Appointment:7.0**)
- The President shall normally communicate his or her decision regarding grant of permanent appointment to the applicant by **January 31**. (**Article 3.2.3.2 Evaluation of Librarians Seeking Permanent Appointment:8.1**)
- A Librarian electing retirement under this section will notify the Academic Vice- President and Provost to this effect by the **January 31** preceding the academic year during which the retirement will commence. (**Article 3.5.1 Retirement Allowance: 1.4**)

February 15th:

- The Librarian Promotion and Assessment Committee shall make its recommendations regarding advancement in rank to the President, by **February 15**. (**Article 3.2.3.3 Evaluation of Librarians Seeking Advancement in Rank:7.1**)

February 28th:

- The meeting shall be followed, by **February 28**, by a letter from the Dean to the Faculty member, with a copy to the Chair, summarizing the points raised. (**Article 2.2.3.1 Evaluation of Faculty Members Holding Probationary Appointments:8.0**)
- The President shall normally communicate his or her decision regarding advancement in rank to the applicant by **February 28**. (**Article 2.2.3.3 Evaluation of Faculty Seeking Advancement in Rank:8.2**)
- The meeting shall be followed, by **February 28**, by a letter from the University Librarian to the Librarian, summarizing the points raised. (**Article 3.2.3.1 Evaluation of Librarians Holding a Probationary Appointment:8.0**)
- The President shall normally communicate his or her decision regarding advancement in rank to the applicant by **February 28**. (**Article 3.2.3.3 Evaluation of Librarians Seeking Advancement in Rank:7.2**)

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

#219-42 West Street (Old Municipal Building) • (902) 867-3368

[Email](#) • [Website](#)