

Inside this Issue:

- 2 PD Fund Update
- 3 Bargaining Update
- 4 President's Report
- 5 Poetry Corner
- 6 The Victoria Salon: Fostering Dialogue on Relevant Provocative Topics in Greater Victoria
- 6 Pre-Retirement Workshops
- 7 Messages from Mark Kunen:
- 8 FPSE AGM & Convention

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A Visit to the Heart of Democracy Kelly Pitman, Member at Large

On May 4, students and educators, including many of your CCFA and FPSE colleagues, filed into the gallery at the BC Legislature to witness Kathy Corrigan, NDP MLA, make a motion on the issue of adult basic education in British Columbia. Specifically, the BC government has recently reversed its 2008 decision that ABE courses be free for all who need them. The motion in response to this decision was as follows: "Be it resolved that this House call on the B.C. government to fully support adult basic education programs as a critical component of job readiness and training." Debate ensued. Sort of.

If you haven't witnessed a parliamentary or legislative session, you ought to, if only to see what the people you voted for (and whose salaries and expenses accounts you pay) are up to. After you have gone through security and given up your possessions, you are ushered into the gallery. You are not allowed to take pictures (they've taken your cell phone anyway) or even notes, nor are you allowed to make any noise, no jeering or cheering allowed, as I have discovered during other visits. As a member of the public, you may be acknowledged but you are to remain silent. After all, you have elected someone to speak for you, and it wouldn't do to turn the formal proceedings into a circus.

You look down at the anointed ones. You may be surprised, even disappointed, that so few seats are occupied. No doubt the missing members are engaged in important work for British Columbians. Still, the empty places are not as disconcerting as is the behaviour of the MLAs who are present. Except when they are speaking, most of the suits below us seem altogether indifferent to what's going on in this hallowed chamber. They peer at their handheld devices, checking email, reading documents, or, for all we know, cruising Used Victoria in search of sailboats and antique footstools. One fellow is bucking the trend with his deep absorption in a book, which turns out to be *Paris 1919* by Margaret McMillan. At various points in the morning, many of the members engage in long and seemingly amusing sidebar conversations with their neighbours. Only the visitors are silent, as they have been instructed to be, and most of the time, only the visitors are attentive.

On the day we were there, Kathy spoke well about the value of education and the wisdom of supporting citizens who seek to better their lives and those of their families. She was echoed by other opposition members delivering passionate oratories. The members of the ruling party responded like beleaguered heroes of the people, arguing that they do support citizens, that a high school diploma is free, and that government grants make possible all manner of transformations (cue soundtrack). It turns out that the cutoff for grants is very low, and that accusation was levelled by the opposition, only to be completely ignored by the sitting government.

As an activist, my interest in politics has always involved faith in using the system to do the best we can and cynicism about the usefulness of the system. Among other things, I believe in the importance of representation and healthy debate, yet I despair at the manipulation of language that makes that debate at best a stalemate. In this session, I heard what I always hear in these debates: the

ruling party delivers vague and unsubstantiated claims; the opposition levels pointed and angry accusations. The Liberals seem to be more evasive and more likely to speak in slogans, while the NDP provide many facts, but it is difficult to know whether this is characteristic of the two parties' approaches or just the way the game is played, with attention to detail being the responsibility of the opposition while the incumbent party avoids being snagged on actual data at every turn. Whatever the case, the same words crop up on both sides: fiscal stability, opportunity, future, strategic, best interests, and, over and over and over, British Columbians. Which is us, silent in the gallery. Which is you. Which is Ravinder, a single mother of two who used to work at Target but got laid off and is now cleaning the washrooms at Hillside Mall, likely for not much more than minimum wage, and on whose behalf, it seems, all these cell-phone checking, table banging politicians are working, or not working, as the case may be.

At the end of the session, the motion passed. But here's the thing: each side had a different interpretation of the phrase "fully support." Thus the morning went, leaving the issue murky and Ravinder's fate undetermined. The taxpayers dollars at work, my friends. More or less.

PD Fund Update

Erin Waugh & Peg Ford

This past winter, the PD committee made some changes to the forms and guidelines for submitting applications for PD funding. Most notably, the new forms ask three key questions:

- Please provide a detailed description of the activity including why you chose this specific activity and location, and the sessions you plan to attend.
- Please describe how the activity will **contribute** to your professional development specifically related to your work at the college.
- Please describe any **deliverables** you expect to bring back from this activity and/or any **outcomes** you wish to achieve

The committee felt that asking faculty to provide answers to these questions would save a lot of the time we spend following up with you to ensure that due diligence is being applied to application approvals.

There are still a few things we need to follow up on: many incomplete applications still arrive in the CCFA office. Until they are complete, the committee **WILL NOT** look at them. Please ensure that you've reviewed the checklist at the top of page 1 of the application and have included **ALL** the items listed. It is your responsibility to provide the necessary information and by failure to do so, you will delay the process. We do appreciate the effort being made by many of you to provide more detailed information relating to your funding applications, and your understanding when we do ask for more information.

Another big change was requiring that the VP Administration sign off on out of country travel prior to the committee seeing the applications. This change hasn't turned out to be working and we are going back to the old process. Your application will be forwarded

to the CCFA office after the Dean signs it. At this point all communication relating to your application should be with the CCFA office only. Once the committee considers your application, you will be notified of your approval or any changes that might have been made. **However, please note that applications for travel outside of Canada still require that the VP Education sign off on the travel before they are final. We will forward these to John's office and follow up with them directly on your behalf.** (Your dean and the VP have other things on their desk, and we ask that you be patient as your application makes its way through the system. There is a two week turnaround for travel authorizations from the VP. Calling his office to find out if your application has been signed is troublesome – it adds workload to already busy schedules: I liken it to your students handing something in either just in time or late, and then asking you to mark it while they wait.)

Whenever possible, apply for your funding well in advance of your activity. The guidelines say six weeks; this is a **MINIMUM** and the committee will accept applications for any time during the next fiscal year (April 1 - March 31) starting in January. This means that even if your course or conference doesn't start until January 2016, you can apply any time after January 2015. After you are approved it is simple to cancel something that you find you can't attend – you simply let Peg or Erin know via email and the application will be pulled and the money freed up for others.

While we know that sometimes opportunities come up at the last minute, it is reasonable that if you are planning to attend an event outside of Canada there should be enough time to allow all parties to review and pass your application along.

Don't hesitate to contact us in the CCFA office if you have questions.

The Contract Negotiating Committee signed a tentative deal last Wednesday afternoon after meeting with the college and PSEA (Post-Secondary Employers Association) a number of days through April and May. Each side of the table put several proposals forward, with the employer attempting to reduce some faculty rights and implement cost-saving measures, and the union doing its best to gain some rights and benefits as well as improve language in the local agreement.



In the end, we were able to sign an agreement that revised a couple of procedures, clarified some language, and improved our benefits without making any significant compromises. The main changes are listed below.

There will be a CCFA General Meeting held in early June to ratify both the common and local agreements. A meeting notice will be going out to the membership shortly.

Many thanks to our FPSE rep, Leah Squance, as well as to members of CNC: Debbie Gascoyne, Kelly Pitman, Mark Kunen, and Randy Tonks, who all worked diligently throughout the process. If you have any questions about either of the tentative agreements, please email me at huntj@camosun.bc.ca, or speak to any of the CNC members.

Benefits:

Starting January 1, 2016:

- Clinical counsellors will also be covered under the Psychological Services Plan
- Dental implants will be covered up to the cost of alternate treatment (i.e. bridges)
- Podiatry and naturopathy coverage will increase from \$200 up to \$400
- Speech therapy coverage will increase from \$100 to \$1000
- Registered psychologist and clinical counsellor coverage will increase from \$1200 to \$1500

Starting January 1, 2017:

- Acupuncture coverage will increase from \$100 to \$300

Starting January 1, 2018:

- Term employees will be eligible for dental coverage with single or successive appointments of 50% or higher for two terms or three quarters, with premiums shared with the employer on a pro-rated basis. Up until that time, term employees will require 10 successive months of employment at 100% to get this benefit.

Parking Dividend *Please note: we are still working out the details of the parking agreement.*

Starting in September, 2015, those faculty members who forego their parking privilege and sign up for the transportation dividend program will receive a one-time incentive payment of \$120. Employees who sign up for a flex parking pass (i.e. parking only half the days per month) will get a one-time payment of \$60. The incentive payments will be made in December of each year. There is a fixed amount available for these, but it will cover at least 150 faculty members.

The value of all parking spots vacated by CCFA members divided by the number of employees opting out of parking, minus 30% to fund commuter benefits such as the intercampus shuttle, will be calculated for an annual dividend, to be paid on October 31st each year. Faculty members who get the flex pass will receive half the dividend payment.

As you can infer, the more faculty members who opt out of parking, the higher the dividend will be. The dividend and the incentive payment will both be taxable.

Other major changes

- 1.02 The reasons for term appointments have been reduced, but there is still a requirement that no school fill more than twenty percent of its full-time equivalent positions with term employees

- 2.04 Disciplinary suspensions, and the reasons for them, must now be given in writing
- 3.02 A laid-off employee will be deemed qualified to bump or transfer into another department if P/he possesses the minimum qualifications for employment in the department or the qualifications of at least one current member of the department, whichever is lesser. The existing language says that laid-off employees can bump or transfer if they possess the departmental qualifications that were in place at the time they were hired at the college.
- 21.01 The grievance procedure has been modified and now includes timelines for each step of the process

I look forward to presenting these changes in more detail at the next general meeting, and I will send out the exact language before then.

President's Report

Mark Kunen, CCFA President

Pacific Northwest Labor History Association Conference (SeaTac May 1 – 3, 2015)

The Pacific North History Association is 47 years old. Knowledge of its existence eluded me for its first 46 years. The Association has chapters in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia. Recognizing that despite my years of involvement in the CCFA I don't know a lot about the history of the labour movement in the Northwest, or anywhere, I jumped at the chance offered by FPSE to attend this conference.

I do know that our decent salaries, our capacity to limit management rights through collective bargaining, and our ability to require due process for our members all arose from the actions of countless principled and courageous people throughout history. At the conference, I met some of these people. Their presence helped me feel connected to heroic figures such as Martin Luther King, Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie, and John L. Handcox, a brave minstrel whose songs served as accompaniment to the organization of resistance to oppression of southern farm workers.

Jack O'Dell, who is 91 years old, was an honoured participant at the conference. He was a community and labour organizer in the United States for most of his life. Along the way he was an intimate advisor to Martin Luther King and worked closely with Jesse Jackson on Jackson's presidential campaign. A former communist, O' Dell can boast of having been labeled as, "the most belligerent witness ever to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee." A book of his writings, Climin' Jacob's Ladder: The Freedom Movement Writings of Jack O'Dell was published in 2010, edited by Nikil Pal Singh. O'Dell now lives in Vancouver.

Mike Honey's presence also helped me to feel connected to the flow of history. Mike is a Professor in the Humanities at the University Of Washington, Tacoma, whose career links scholarship with social action and music. He was a friend and singing companion of Pete Seeger. At the conference Honey told stories and sang songs which brought Seeger and Woody Guthrie into the room along

with John L. Handcox. Honey has just published, John L. Handcox, the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, and the African American Song Tradition. Handcox's songs tracked and perhaps helped to inspire the resistance of tenant farmers whose lives were not much removed from slavery. Handcox was an artist as a songwriter and singer and also at being somewhere else whenever authorities, self-appointed or otherwise, came for him. I now have a CD of his songs in case anyone wants to listen to them.



Most inspiring to me was Terri Mast. She was married to Silme Domingo, one of two Filipino-American union activists and reformers who were murdered in Seattle in the 1980's in response their opposition to union corruption and to Ferdinand Marcos. Much of their work attempted to address the harsh and inequitable treatment of Filipino and indigenous workers in Alaskan canneries. The conference wrapped up with the film, "The Legacy of Silme Domingo and Gene Vieras." Terri Mast spoke after the film, still fighting tears for her beloved. Her loss has not stopped her from working for social justice. She is the national Secretary/Treasurer of the Inland Boatman's Union, a union that grew out of the organization founded by Domingo and Vieras.

As for Joe Hill, I did not know that he was a songwriter himself. His spirit lives on, not just in Paul Robeson's, "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night," but in his own songs, some of which were performed at the conference.

Here's a chorus from one of his many songs:

Oh, Workers do unite!
 To crush the tyrant's might,
 The ONE BIG UNION BANNER IS UNFURLED --
 Come slaves from every land,
 Come join this fighting band,
 It's named INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD.
 I'm sure it was catchy at the time. Unfortunately, I can't

say that the conference heralded the unfurling of a lot more banners of labour and social justice movements in North America. The theme of the keynote speech was, “What makes you think the labor movement will survive? How must it change and how is it changing?” The speaker was Bill Fletcher, the author of Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path to Social Justice.

Many signs are not good. Union density is decreasing throughout North America, even more so in the U.S. than in Canada. Real income for most people is decreasing or stagnating while the 1% of the 1% consolidate their ownership of this planet to –I don’t know—use as a collateral to buy Mars or something. Multitudes of people still see a meaningful place in society as something for others, not for them.

And yet, the pendulum may be reversing direction

The city of SeaTac, Washington (it’s not just an airport) is establishing a \$15/hour minimum wage along with Seattle, Los Angeles, and probably soon Alberta. The BC Fed and FPSE support this wage for B.C.

Jonathan Rosenblum, a community organizer in the town of SeaTac told of a union pray-in that was organized as a successful protest of a fast food restaurant’s firing of a group of Muslim workers for praying at work. Scores of people from various religions, probably along with some atheists faking it for the cause, prayed together in front of the offending establishment, and their prayers were answered. The workers were rehired. Also, health care union organizers reported effective resistance to the damaging effects on workers and citizens of the corporatization of previously community-oriented hospitals in the state of Washington, and Alexandra Bradbury, labour organizer, editor of the periodical, “Labour Notes,” and, yes, a singer/songwriter, explained how unions in Brooklyn are forming from scratch. Maybe the pendulum is reversing direction.

What is it with the prevalence of labour activists who are also singers?

Maybe, as was stated by Bernice Johnson Reagon: “Singing will not set you free, but don’t try to be free without it.”

All in all, I was moved by the perseverance of the participants. Some young people were there, but walkers and canes were prevalent. The association’s president, Ross K. Reider is retiring after 37 years in office! A video testimonial showed him speaking, marching, organizing, and protesting throughout a career dedicated to social justice.

Inspired by those who came before them and inspiring to those who will come after, these people still believe in and work for a better world.

Let’s hope. Let’s help.

Poetry Corner

Roses in the Snow
Submitted by Brent Wassermann,
written when he was 10

Do you believe in happiness
Where wishes can come True?
Do you believe in rainbows with a pot of Gold for you?
Do you believe in Angels
And everything they know?
Or are you like most others
Who scoff at Roses in the Snow?
Well, I believe in Happiness
Because dreams do come true.
Your parents wished for happiness
And found it Born in you.
Yes, there are sad times

When your days are filled with pain.
But soon you’ll find your rainbow
As the sun shines through the rain.
Angels are our loved ones
Who’ve previously passed us by
I know they’re with us Always
For their Love can never die.
You see, Beauty is where you find it
Sometimes people never Know
That Love is ever powerful
It’ll give you Roses in the Snow.

Pre-Retirement Workshops



We have scheduled two days of Pre-Retirement workshops to be presented by ABCCPPR:

AT Lansdowne, June 24 in WT101 9am to 3pm

AT Interurban August 25 in CC121 9am to 3pm

Space is limited so please RSVP to Erin Waugh via outlook calendar by June 5 to reserve your spot!

The Victoria Salon: Fostering Dialogue on Relevant Provocative Topics in Greater Victoria

Katherina V. Tarnai-Lokhorst, FEC, P.Eng.

As many of you know, I began my doctoral studies at RRU last year. The first residency was pretty intense as we were immersed in social scientific techniques and issues on the local, regional, national and world stages. It was during that time that I was introduced to an organization from the UK called the Institute of Ideas. One of our professors, Dr. Bill Durodié, is very involved with this institute and in their biannual debate, the Battle of Ideas. As we watched one of their debates on YouTube, I felt a growing sense of urgency to organize something similar in Victoria: public debates on issues that relevant to Greater Victoria residents, with input from local experts, in order to foster informed dialogue amongst our citizens. After almost a year of exploring the idea, and talking to locals and Brits about the best way to move forward, I co-founded The Victoria Salon with Dorothy Kennedy, D.Phil., an active member of the Vancouver Island Oxford and Cambridge Society (VIOCS) who had been trying to engage Bill as a guest speaker at one of their events. Instead, he introduced us to each other and we were on our way.

I had already been in conversation with Kathryn LeGros about Camosun College sponsoring the events by providing space and services for our non-profit events. Kathryn immediately recognized the long-term benefits to the college for hosting these sorts of outreach activities on site. Without her encouragement at the very beginning, I'm not sure if the Victoria Salon could have been established so quickly.

March 24th, 2015, was our inaugural debate on municipal amalgamation. Our proposition was:

Be it resolved that whereas the citizens of Greater Victoria have elected, through a non-binding question, to explore the concept of amalgamation, that the number of local governments in the Capital Region be reduced from the current 13 municipalities.

Proponents for the resolution were Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, PhD, Lesley Ewing, Tara Ney, PhD., Jim McDavid, Ph.D.. Emmanuel, Tara and Jim are all professors in UVic's School of Public Administration, Lesley was a board member of Amalgamation Yes, but spoke as a community member to make sure that the citizen viewpoint was heard on the proponent side. Tara also spoke on behalf of her community of Oak Bay. Stephen Andrew acted as moderator and did a fantastic job keeping the speakers to their time limits and making sure that audience speakers stayed focused on comments or questions about the issue.

Our event format is loosely based on a formal debate schedule but is geared more towards informing and engaging the audience in the dialogue rather than competition and choosing a winner. Our agenda is as follows. After introductions, each speaker is given ten minutes to present their key points. Following this, each speaker is given two more minutes to rebut anything said by his or her opponents. Then, attention is turned to the floor where audience members are encouraged to approach the microphone and make their own comments or ask clarifying questions of the panelists, limiting their remarks to two minutes each.

The Amalgamation Debate was lively and provocative, as you can see for yourself on the video produced by Anton Skinner for The Victoria Salon (posted on our website). Or you can listen to the audio file as you work (also posted on our website).

The panelists raised some points I had not heard before – such as integration versus amalgamation, how bike lanes end at municipal boundaries, or whether the CRD is the right vehicle for regional planning (this may be



a future debate topic!). The audience was clearly engaged throughout the evening in the issue at hand.

As we approached the audience portion, I was worried that no one would step up to participate, but we had several people come forward and, in fact, had a little difficulty getting some of them to stop! The event closed at 8:30 as planned but most of the audience members stayed until well after 9pm as the conversation continued with energy and enthusiasm. The 'after-buzz' was amazing, telling us how successful we were at creating an effective event. Our second debate was organized shortly after, for May 12th, 2015: "Strait Talk About Sewage".



We quickly found too many potential speakers as the sewage topic proved to be just as provocative as our first! Excellent! Dr. Tom Maler and Chris Corps, both active "we need more sewage treatment in Greater Victoria" proponents, quickly signed on and requested time to give detailed presentations. Although formal presentations do not really fit the format Dorothy and I planned, we agreed. For opponents to more sewage treatment beyond that which already exists in Greater Victoria, we agreed to welcome Dr. Shaun Peck and Brian Burchill, both already active in the asynchronous sewage debate. Our event turned out to be a great opportunity to see these four men face-off and directly challenge each other's opinions. Again, many speakers came forward from the audience to add their

points and probe for more information from our presenters. General consensus? You be the judge: the debate portion of the event is already posted on the Victoria Salon website!

As for me, my doctoral studies continue. Bill Durodié is now my supervisor and I have now completed all the course work, am preparing for my candidacy exams, and assembling my research team. If you are interested, I will be presenting my research proposal at the upcoming CCFA SD Showcase on June 23rd.

Although my research planning is intense – especially as I am teaching three Quarter 3 classes and preparing an article for publication and presentation in Seattle next month – I am proud to be of service to my region by organizing public debates through The Victoria Salon.

For more information about future debates and to suggest topics, or to volunteer to be a helper or a speaker, please check out our website and drop me a line: TheVictoriaSalon.wordpress.com.

Messages from Mark Kunen:

1: Please join me in recognizing the newly elected executive members and expressing appreciation for their willingness to contribute to the work and well-being of the CCFA.

Please note that the term of the new executive begins on September 1st. The current executive is in place till then.

2015-16 Executive Committee:

President: Bronwen Welch
Vice President: Justine Noel
Secretary: Blair Fisher
Treasurer: Brent Wassermann
CMC Chair: Judith Hunt
CNC Chair: Kelly Pitman
PD Chair: Jacquie Conway
Members at Large:
Chris Ayles
Diane Gilliland
Tanya Kirkland

2: We're aiming to publish one more issue of the Confluence in June, before a summer publication break. Please contact me or Erin Waugh with ideas about what you would like to read about or what you would like to write about.

This year the FPSE AGM and Convention took place in Kelowna, hosted by the Okanagan College Faculty Association. Except for an afternoon of optional recreational activities such as wine tour, boat rides, and nature hikes, all events took place at the Coast Capri Hotel.

For many faculty members FPSE may be just four initials. This year the CCFA's delegates to the AGM have shared their impressions of the event in order to help make FPSE a bit more familiar to the CCFA membership.

The CCFA sent a full slate of 10 delegates to Kelowna. I asked each delegate to provide a statement, short or longer, about something they took away from the four days in Kelowna. I hope this information will spark the interest of other CCFA members to attend next time around.

Here are the responses:

Candace Fertile, English

What has stuck in my mind is Michael Harris's description of his interview with Preston Manning about Stephen Harper. Manning said, "What you have to understand about Stephen Harper is that words mean nothing."

That's just plain scary.

On the positive side, I enjoyed listening to John Horgan.

And the wine tour was lovely. It was fun to taste different wines and great to see a bit of the landscape around Kelowna.

(And thanks to Mark for bringing back my wine in his car!)

Jacque Conway, CETL

It was a great learning experience; I enjoyed listening to discussion and being part of the FPSE decision making process.

Bill Wong, Psychology

As a first-time attendee, here are the top three things I learned:

1. FPSE executive and its members are genuinely concerned about the most vulnerable students and programs (e.g., FPSE's advocacy and support on maintaining accessibility of ELD programs).
2. Many funds and efforts are committed to a wide array of FPSE initiatives and voting during the AGM is a way in which we have a "say" in these matters.
3. As you know, education and political policies are interconnected. It was fascinating to hear about the present and emerging issues, regardless of one's political perspective

Jody Isaac, ABE

I value social justice and by participating in FPSE I clearly saw how all of the work that FPSE does is related to social justice. Also as a CCFA member I am grateful for all of the amazing benefits that I receive as a member. I felt inspired to learn more about FPSE to see how I can support the important work that they do for all of us.

Blair Fisher, Criminal Justice

I valued the camaraderie with like-minded educators with similar challenges, opportunities and goals.

Judith Hunt, ELD

Although I had one of the worst colds of my life during the whole of the FPSE AGM, I still enjoyed it. I enjoyed meeting up with other FPSE members I've come to know, I enjoyed hearing people speak passionately about social justice, and I enjoyed dancing like a maniac to one of the best dance bands I've ever heard. I caught up with other bargainers from around the province to find out where they were with negotiations, and I discussed the provincial ESL funding situation and how we can continue to pressure the government about it. I attended one workshop on the plight of garment workers in Central America and another on how to get one's message across to the public. I took the opportunity to get to know some of my Camosun colleagues a little better and was able to learn a little more about the Kelowna region as well. The AGM was varied, interesting, and fun as well as being a good reminder of what FPSE and unions are all about – working with peers, supporting the community, and improving lives. The cold is now pretty much gone from my head, but the ideas and memories from the AGM are in it for the long haul.

Debbie Hlady (English)

These are my highlights of the FPSE AGM: listening to Michael Harris, journalist and author of the book Stephen Harper: Party of One, which was both illuminating and terrifying; hearing John Horgan, Leader of the Opposition, express his support for quality, accessible post-secondary education in BC; and, as always, connecting with educators from across the province who face the same challenges as we do and who keep trying to make things better for all of us and for our students.

One theme that kept getting repeated throughout the conference was a commitment to support and strengthen Adult Basic Education in our province. It was gratifying to hear that this is not just an issue that concerns ABE educators, but that it is an issue that concerns everyone in the post-secondary system. The provincial government's own Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recommended that the government should make sure that ABE is adequately funded and consider removing tuition fees to ensure access to post-secondary education. Nonetheless, the government decided that institutions have to start charging tuition for ABE courses. While there is a new Adult Upgrading Grant (with the unfortunately unattractive acronym, AUG), it starts getting clawed back at an income level of \$23, 647 for a single adult...below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off for a person living in Vancouver. Cutting funding to ABE will save \$15.9 million dollars a year. At the same time, the government is predicting a \$900 million surplus. When there is general agreement that we live in a "knowledge economy", adding barriers to education does not make social or economic sense. Please check out FPSE's online campaign called "Open the Doors", at www.openthedoors.ca.

Francis Adu-Febiri, Social Sciences

An exercise in practical democracy on behalf of Camosun Faculty, the AGM provided me with a deep appreciation and a learning experience of educational advocacy in action. FPSE advocates for useful, relevant, affordable and accessible education in British Columbia, Canada and globally. The main theme of this year's AGM was "Open to Learning." The plenary session presentations by labour movement leaders, a renowned author and journalist, the BC student federation president, and the BC Opposition leader were inspiring. The solidarity I witnessed in meeting was very encouraging and refreshing. The workshops I attended equipped me to engage in storying for transformative education. On the whole I was empowered by what I learned from this AGM and hope to use some of the learning to contribute to the work the CCFA does to support us and our students.

Mark Kunen, Community Learning Partnerships

The featured speakers were all polished, professional, and persuasive, but what impressed me more were the many delegates, not always smooth in their presentation, who came to one of the microphones on the floor to speak for their beliefs. I recall one woman in particular who haltingly but with deep conviction told of her efforts on behalf of a student whose boss was refusing to pay her for time in training, legal requirements notwithstanding. Eventually, through the effort of this instructor and others the student received the money owed to her. This instructor is paid to teach, not to advocate for her students' legal rights, but her willingness to stand up for this student reminded me that at the root of our work as educators is a commitment to improving students' lives.

Also, I'll carry away the image of Cindy Oliver, calmly calling to a close her last AGM after 13 years as president, seemingly at peace.

Randy Tonks, Psychology

Attending FPSE AGM for the first time I was really not quite sure of what to expect. Fortunately there was a first time delegates' session to start things off as everyone else was getting settled in their rooms and preparing for the first plenary session. Once the AGM began I realized the holistic social nature of what was coming. Each local seated in group, randomly organized around the room, door prizes were being offered to those whose names were drawn, and who were present in the room at the time of calling-If you are not here you don't get your prize. Shortly afterwards we all sang the labour hymn, Solidarity Forever, and then were greeted by the Westbank First Nation Chief (Robert Louie). The business continued on and off, reading reports and voting with your card, if you are awake and fast enough to do so, then a quick caucus before voting again. First time speakers at the AGM were encouraged to identify themselves as such, receiving a warm round of applause for doing so.

Outside of the business at the AGM there were some interesting speakers, notably Michael Harris (@harrisauthor) speaking on issues arising from his book, Stephen Harper: A Party of One, identifying the Rubicon nature of the upcoming federal election along with numerous insights into the mind of Stephen Harper. Two sessions of workshops and a variety of social activities were also interspersed into the four days of gathering and many opportunities to meet and confer with people from across the province. All in all an interesting and eye opening event.