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With Respect to Respect

Mark Kunen, CCFA President

The current CCFA Collective Agreement, the common agreement part, states that the Union and the College agree that mutual understanding and respect contribute to good working relationships, and that the two parties commit to "jointly offer and develop mandatory training programs to...promote the development and maintenance of a respectful workplace environment." Workplace conflict and bullying are cited as barriers to such an environment.

The Respectful Workplace Policy is a big part of the College's effort to ensure such an environment. Although the CCFA was consulted to a degree on its wording, neither the Policy nor the accompanying Procedures document was endorsed by the Union. The CCFA worked with the administration on the on-line training module but was not involved in the decision to require everyone to attend an in-person training session. All of that places me in a tricky position as a member of a joint Respectful Workplace Committee, the task of which, if I understand correctly, is to review the current policy, procedures, and training. The first meeting of the committee since I've been CCFA president will be in March.

Aspects of the policy trouble me, and while I'm happy to suggest improvements to it, I need to be clear that the CCFA takes no ownership of it in case the policy should become a factor in grievance matters. My concerns fall into three areas: the scope of the definition of personal harassment, the requirement that employees report perceived violations of the policy, and the focus of the policy on what not to do.



Personal harassment is defined in the policy as any behaviour directed against another person that a reasonable person would know or ought to know would cause *offense*, humiliation, or intimidation (*italics mine*). First, who is to judge what a reasonable person ought to know? A more reasonable person? More important, is it wise or necessary to protect us from feeling offended? Stanley Fish, in "The Harm in Free Speech," (NY Times, (June 12th, 2012) states, "Offense can be given by any speech act—in particular circumstances one might offend by saying hello."

I can't imagine an offense-free workplace (In fact, I am a little offended by the supposition that I need to be trained in respectful behaviour). This policy could contribute to an environment in which people fear retribution for expressing honestly held opinions. Any belief can be expressed in a respectful manner, but when a belief itself is defined as disrespectful, free discourse is in trouble. We're making our way step by glorious step out of a time when countless people needed to suppress their identities out of fear of disrespect or worse. Let's not replace that era with one in which people must suppress their beliefs for similar reasons.

The debate between the value of free speech and the need to respect what many people hold sacred is roiling the world, and there are no easy answers.

The free speech position is articulated by Fleming Rose, the foreign editor of the Danish Newspaper, Jyllands-Posten, who states that, “in an increasingly multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious world, ...more cultural diversity does not call for less diversity of speech, but for more. For if we insist on living by the principle of ‘do not offend,’ we will end in a tyranny of silence.” (“Can Hate Speech be Eradicated?” Boston Globe, February 17, 2015.)

Stanley Fish takes a more moderate position. In his review of *The Harm in Hate Speech* By Jeremy Waldon, he states that, “But harms to dignity...involve more than the giving of offense. They involve undermining a public good, which [Waldon] identifies as the ‘implicit assurance’ extended to every citizen that while his beliefs and allegiance may be criticized and rejected by some of his fellow citizens, he will nevertheless be viewed, even by his polemical opponents, as someone who has an equal right to membership in the society.”

A dogmatic position on either end of the spectrum is bound to be wrong (I say dogmatically), but with persons being imprisoned daily for simply criticizing their governments, I am more willing to risk being offended and, implicitly, offending, than I am to risk excessive restriction of freedom of expression. The line may be hard to find between actions or speech that cause offense and those that are injurious to human dignity, but that is a good challenge to accept. For now, I remain concerned that the college’s policy of citing giving offense as a form of disrespect may unreasonably suppress legitimate expression of ideas, especially in combination with the policy’s requirement that employees report policy violations.

The Respectful Workplace Policy requires us to tell on people. “Individuals are... responsible for reporting *any* violations of this policy to their workplace leader” (italics mine again). This statement is embedded under Principles in the sub-section Human Rights: Discrimination and Discriminatory Behaviour, but it reads as applicable to the policy as a whole. The same requirement sits in the College’s recently adopted Standards of Conduct Policy.

Such requirements are clearly subject to disrespectful abuse. My childhood friends and associates were guided by several unquestioned codes. One was to always tell the truth unless your fingers were crossed (The RWP says nothing about telling the truth). Another was not to tattle on one another except in emergencies. That code, for all its childishness, did help us to work a lot of things out for ourselves. I would prefer that our employer grant us the same leeway. I am not advocating that the college be guided by the moral values of eight-year olds, but just as severe feuds have developed when neighbours report each other to authorities for minor transgressions of by-laws, there may be unintended consequences of establishing an environment in which we are all expected to monitor and report on each other’s behavior. Individuals could try to use the policy as a weapon against people with whom they

are in conflict.

Finally, the policy seems more about disrespect than about respect. Respect does not arise automatically in the absence of disrespect. The policy is full of directives about what not to do. Do not discriminate. Do not harrass. Do not bully. Do not offend (see above). Forms of disrespect are defined at length while respect is defined only in broad terms.

The absence of disrespect may leave only indifference, not respect. Respect requires a recognition of the other as one who like oneself, carries within him or her grief, fear, worry, and disappointment and yet turns a positive and generous face to the world most of the time. Respect requires recognition of the knowledge and skills colleagues have gained through education and life experience and an openness to learn through dialogue. If I haven’t modified at least one opinion today, then probably I have not been listening well.

Forgiveness is another element of respect. We all have bad moments and bad days. Grudges are boulders strewn across life’s paths. Masai Ujiri, the General Manager of the Toronto Raptors, was respectful in a forgiving way to Daniel Perry, another NBA GM after Perry had made the offensive remark that an NBA player has “too much African in him.” Ujiri, who is from Nigeria and is deeply committed to Africa, reached a hand out to Perry. “We are all human,” he wrote in the Globe and Mail. “We all make mistakes. My hope is that we will soon see Danny Perry at a Basketball Without Borders camp..., so that he may come to know us. Because when we know better, we do better.” (Sports Illustrated, February 9th, 2015). I find those words inspiring.

Victoria may be the most polite city in the most polite country on earth. A sign on a wounded door at the Gordon Head Rec Centre asks people to use an adjacent door and apologizes for the inconvenience of requiring patrons to move two steps to the left! The same facility, instead of demanding that customers not steal pool toys, asks them to kindly leave the toys in the facility so that others can use them. Everyone thanks bus drivers. I can drive a month without hearing a car horn. In my experience, the great majority of Camosun employees are part of this fabric. One of the reasons I’ve hung around for so long is that nowhere else have I been treated with so much kindness and civility. I know that everyone’s experience is not like mine and that not everyone at the college is guided by kindness and fairness in their interactions with others. Resulting problems, some of them quite serious, need to be addressed, but there seems to be a disconnect between the resources being devoted to this policy and the comportment of most people at the college

A policy can go only so far and may even be a distraction. A respectful work place depends not on words on a page, but on the daily practice of recognition, engagement, and

appreciation of everyone to each other. It is important to protect human rights and dignity, but we need to be careful not to filter behavior so finely that unnecessary constraints are placed on ways of being a person.

I'm okay with advising on training programs and hope to have some say in what training is required and what is optional. Example: Don't sneeze on your neighbour's sandwich -mandatory; offer you neighbor half of your sandwich-optional.

In the meantime, sign me up for a ban on grudges.

Do you have a response to this article or advice for me on what contributions to make to the Respectful Workplace Committee?

Please send comments or suggestions to kunen@camosun.bc.ca

Bargaining 2015

I arrived in Vancouver on Saturday morning, January 24, ready to meet with the bargainers from seven other FPSE locals who would be part of the provincial bargaining sessions with PSEA scheduled to take place over the next two weeks. The other faculty association negotiators were from Selkirk, New Caledonia, Okanagan, Douglas, North Island and Northwest Community Colleges and College of the Rockies.

We had been trying to get to the table for many months, held up by discussions on how bargaining was to proceed this round for the local and common collective agreements. Although we had met with the employer locally last April, we weren't able to bargain until procedures were worked out for provincial bargaining at the end of 2014.

There are 18 separate faculty associations in FPSE, but some of the locals, such as VCC Faculty Association, decided to bargain everything locally rather than go for the provincial table. Others, such as TRU and Kwantlen Faculty Associations, could not bargain at the provincial table because their employers had decided not to participate. However, we had observers from many of these and other institutions during the two weeks, as well as a non-regular faculty member representative each of the bargaining days. The observers and reps, although they weren't

signatories and couldn't vote, helped immensely during caucus by sharing their perspectives and experiences. In addition, we had two FPSE Bargaining Coordination Committee co-chairs, Bob Davis and Leslie Molnar, and the spokesperson, Lesley Burke-O'Flynn, the FPSE rep responsible for bargaining.

On the other side of the table were the CEO of PSEA, Anita Bleick, and other PSEA representatives, a few reps from the participating colleges' administration (though not from Camosun), and a couple of people from PSEC (the Ministry of Finance's Public Sector Employers' Council). In all, there were about ten on the employers' side and fifteen on our side at any given time.

Over the first two days of caucus, we finalized our bargaining proposals. They included the need for financial exigency in the case of layoffs (meaning the employer could only lay off to meet money shortages); language on personal harassment; improvements in various benefits including hearing aids, eye exams, vision care, paramedical coverage, dental coverage, and sick leave; low wage redress for faculty members on secondary scales; a fair salary increase; money to improve local issues; and various deletions, additions, and corrections. Of course, the final deal did not include all of these.

Although only one person from each

side spoke, we all had roles to play. A few people on each side, including me, took verbatim notes during the bargaining sessions – these notes are carefully kept as they can be crucial to understanding the intent of a clause and may be used in disputes or grievances in the future. A few people were tasked with watching body language and facial expressions to determine whether any proposals elicited surprise or annoyance, giving valuable information about positions. Of course, this also meant that we had to stay as stony faced as possible. This is not to say that there was a complete lack of humour at the table, but the negotiating process itself was rather serious.

During the next two weeks, our proposals went back and forth, usually once or twice a day. We would caucus during the breaks to discuss how far we could push, what we could accept, and the best strategy to make sure that our priorities were kept on the table. With eight different institutions represented, there was a lot of debate around what was most important – conditions aren't the same at every college, and making sure that everyone's interests were addressed was central to our being able to function well as a bargaining team.

Judith Hunt, CNC Chair



Each time a new proposal package was tabled, we got closer to a tentative deal. In the end, we ended up with something that was acceptable, although the lack of progress on secondary scales was a big disappointment to many. The deal includes a 5½ % increase over five years, some increases in benefits (eyeglasses up to \$500 every two years and hearing aids up to \$1000 every three years starting January 2017, better paramedical coverage starting in January 2016, and treatment for addictions), a little money to use during local bargaining, and some other changes that we felt would be beneficial to us, including getting PSEA to agree to doing some serious investigative work with us on the situation of non-regular employees, a huge problem in many of the institutions in our system.

It's hard to describe the entire process adequately, but suffice it to say that it involved many long discussions and debates, difficult decisions, and compromises, as well as many laughs and a great sense of camaraderie. With so much at stake for our members, emotions ran high at times. Many were frustrated and angry at the lack of headway made on improving secondary scales, and one of the locals actually refrained from signing due to this inability to better the situation. However, while doing collective bargaining with the present government is, some might say, not really bargaining at all, at least we were able to make some progress, and the CCFA members that I've heard from so far seem to be fairly satisfied with what we achieved.

Of course, this agreement is tentative until we finish local bargaining and ratify the complete collective agreement with the membership. I'll be presenting the tentative common agreement at the February 27th CCFA General Meeting so that members can get clarification if needed. In the meantime, questions and comments are always welcome.

Finally, I'd like to extend my thanks to the CCFA Contract Negotiating Committee: Kelly Pitman, Mark Kunen, Debbie Gascoyne, and Randy Tonks, and to all my fellow bargainers at the table in Vancouver.

Faculty Spotlight:

Kelly Pitman, Member at Large

I wish I could say that I recently sat down for a chat with my friend Saeed Shahni, but it's been over a year since we spoke. Saeed died in November of 2013, and he is sorely missed by all who knew him. I would have loved to interview him for this spotlight, but I will have to work from memory.

Saeed was a member of the CCFA Contract Management Committee for several years. I got to know Saeed the way I got to know many CCFA members when I was on that committee. Along with another colleague in the Electronics Department, Saeed found that his regularization was taking an unwarranted amount of time, and he approached the union for guidance. Working with Darryl Ainsley, Saeed eventually secured continuing status, and he was a valuable permanent addition to his department. Saeed worked hard, often late into the evening, and cared about his students. I have no doubt they found in him a patient and thoughtful teacher.

Saeed was originally from Iran, and as a young man, he had participated in the Iranian Revolution. We used to joke that Saeed, having helped to bring down a corrupt monarchy, was more than qualified to run interference

between the employer and union members. Like many of his compatriots, Saeed was forced to leave his native country and could never return. He once told me that the revolution resulted in a government many of the young resisters could not have foreseen, but he did what seemed right at the time.



On the Contract Management Committee, Saeed carefully considered the facts of each case and always found new questions to ask or another way to look at an issue. He was not quick to judge, and when he spoke he always did so in a way that brought the humanity of the people involved into sharp relief. He had a strong commitment to social justice, but those who worked with him know he brought more to the work than that. Saeed epitomised compassion and felt deeply for people experiencing uncertainty and distress. And he listened. The ability

to listen is perhaps the most underrated of all human characteristics, and Saeed listened better than anyone I've known. I once told him he would make a good counsellor. He smiled, shrugged, and raised his eyebrows in his trademark "who, me?" expression and, Saeed-like, waited for me to say more.

He was also funny, and I don't doubt that his students and colleagues had the pleasure of his occasional puns, all the more amusing because English wasn't his first language, or even his second (he spoke German and French as well). His jokes were delivered the way he said everything, quietly and without a hint of meanness, but slyly witty nevertheless.

Saeed and I talked many times of the college, of teaching, of politics, and of his life and mine, and whenever we spoke I was struck anew by his gentleness and his equilibrium. Even during his last days in the world, Saeed seemed to have peace. When he learned how serious his illness was, he decided not to pursue harsh treatments which might briefly prolong his time on earth but which would have terrible side effects. I drank tea with him in his beautiful garden that summer. That was when he told me the story of fleeing Iran, walking over the mountains in the snow, barely able to feel his feet. He told it calmly, shrugging at my exclamations. It would never have occurred to him to claim heroism, yet he had fought for justice in the face of danger, a danger some of his comrades did not survive.

I last saw Saeed a week before he died, on a rainy day in November. The garden now was dark and dripping, and he, his wife, Femke, and I sat inside at their kitchen table. He couldn't speak much because of the tumor pressing on his brain, but we managed a conversation anyway. Femke or I would speak, and then listen to what he said with his eyes. Sometimes, I had to guess at his meaning, offering up my words in place of the ones he couldn't articulate, and he would smile and nod when I got it right. Cancer had taken away his voice, but not his magnificent smile. When it was time to go, he walked me to the door, though he was clearly tired. We hugged, and then we looked at each other, both now speaking only with our eyes. At the end of his life, Saeed showed me that true communication is a matter not of words, but of spirits. It's a gift I do not take for granted.

Why the CCFA Shouldn't Strike

Gordon Alexander, Retired

Perhaps you have wondered why the CCFA contract contains a "no strike" clause. If you haven't, you probably won't want to read this account of the origins of the clause, and its continuing potential advantage to CCFA members.

Clause 27 of the CCFA contract doesn't actually say "no strike," but the effect of required arbitration in the event of an impasse surrounding negotiations amounts to the same thing. I was there during the time a version of the clause was included in the contract, so let me set the context for you based on memory, not a careful review of documentation. Any errors in the following are the result of my biases which have shaped those memories.

The college arose out of the local school board's night school program (the Institute of Adult Studies) augmented with a university transfer segment, a career training component, and a large non-credit community education program. These were "melded" with the existing provincial vocational school at Interurban. Camosun College opened in September 1971, and was largely a creature of the school board, some of whose members had little interest in new expenses for local taxpayers—some things don't change much. The BCTF had recently struck over pension matters, so the board was not in a friendly mood.

The first contract was drafted by the administration, and faculty had little power: no association, no leadership, and no provincial organization. Vancouver Community College had just organized under the labour code, and some thought we should do the same, although many thought unions had no place in post-secondary education. Public service groups were gaining collective rights during the 60s, but many thought the labour code model would not fit educational circumstances. University faculty were

prohibited from forming unions until very recently, and the RCMP have just gained that right this year.



There was broad concern about unionization of education outside the college as well among the public and legislators in the 60s and 70s. The Colleges and Institutes Act still has a section intended to find some non-union way to address personnel matters in colleges called "the fair comparison method", an option never chosen by employees. What did occur was the formation of the CCFA which sought certification in 1972. At the same time the administration drafted a first contract containing a form of binding arbitration known as "final offer selection" (FOS). This particular structure required the negotiating parties to present a final offer at the end of an agreed process to the pre-determined arbiter, but the arbiter could select only one or the other proposal in its entirety. Unlike normal arbitrations which permit the arbiter to pick and choose elements of the two parties' proposals, in FOS it's all or nothing. The arbiter becomes a selector, in effect.

The theory was that neither side would wish to risk substantial change recklessly, since the loss of one or more key clauses and/or wordings could have huge impacts on the fortunes of the two parties. This theory was supported in practice by the experience at Camosun because when the system was used, the two parties were so close to each other at the end of the agreed process that agreement was reached without use of an arbiter/selector. This arose because there was a brief period of time between the presentation of final offers and the engagement of the arbiter/selector during which time either party could accept the other side's final offer.

The non-strike approach to negotiations benefited Camosun faculty as it rebalanced the relative power relationship between the two parties, making each equal in the process. It also resulted in reasoned and limited disruption to organizational relationships and educational activities. During the 70s and 80s, much time was devoted to trying to structure relevant comparisons to guide wage discussions during a period of rapid inflation. On balance, FOS worked well, and only fell out of use as post-secondary education increasingly became provincial, with bargaining being largely controlled by the government's agents and the unions' provincial association. At some point the wording changed from FOS to traditional arbitration. Provincially, Camosun is unique with its binding arbitration clause, but over time it has been left dormant without consequence since the college and the CCFA have accepted the outcomes of various common tables with local sub-agreements. Were there to be an impasse, the clause would likely become relevant, including the requirement that the parties decide upon the form of arbitration to be used. FOS could be proposed by the CCFA.

While many think of strikes as an essential aspect of unionism, others find the prospect of faculty striking abhorrent in part because the ones inconvenienced most are students and the community, not the college nor the government which established the context leading to the confrontation. Even in industry, a strike's power is largely

its threat, not an actual strike. One saw this gap between threat and action clearly last summer when the teachers struck, but the government had decided that enduring a teachers' strike was not its worst option, leaving the teachers powerless to influence events through its strike. Recall also that, in essence, the teachers were striking to gain binding arbitration.

The CCFA has binding arbitration at the present time, and it may be wise to retain it, since it seems unlikely that the current government would approve any contract in the public sector which required binding arbitration at any level. (I believe all local contracts must be reviewed at the provincial level prior to final approval.) In my view, education and all other government activities will continue to be starved of funds while the health portfolio continues to absorb every available dollar, leaving education with diminished public funding in inflation-adjusted dollars for the foreseeable future. In a time of self-induced provincial revenue shortfalls due to tax cuts and declining public support for education, clause 27 may become a stay against roll-backs and once again help redress an imbalance of power as it did in the 70s.

Gordon Alexander is a retired English Instructor. He was CCFA president in 19748 and served for several years on the Executive and the Negotiating Committees. He was also the star shortstop of the fabled Green Machine softball team on which the current CCFA president was the centrefielder.

President's Report

Mark Kunen, CCFA President

From FPSE:

At the 2014 FPSE AGM at Whistler the delegates voted to allocate \$ 1 million for a public campaign to promote a post secondary education and a restoration of fuller government funding for PSE. The planned campaign is a response not only to continuing reductions in funding but also to the government's Blueprint for Education, which delegates viewed as being too focused on job creation with insufficient attention to broader purposes for education. Last Friday, I participated in a meeting of the FPSE Presidents Council at the Vancouver Airport to review the current status of that campaign. Key themes include the need to restore funding, to reduce student debt loads, and to ensure a broad choice of educational pathways. The campaign will make sophisticated use of social media in an effort to form alliances amongst a multitude of groups. The developers are from a group called TRUTHFOOL COMMUNICATIONS. Their web-site is <http://truth-fool.com/>.



One of the developers is also a stand-up comedian named Sean Devlin. Try this link for some laughs and some inspiration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4kvY9bVDi0>.

As part of the campaign, FPSE hosted a conference entitled, "Open to Learning- Policies and Perspectives on Post-Secondary Education in BC" on January 24th in Vancouver. I attended along with PD Committee Chair Jacquie Conway and Blair Fisher, a faculty member in the Criminal Justice Department. What I took from the conference was that the interests of college presidents overlap with those of faculty and students in terms of the structures and funding of the system, that strong economic arguments with convincing quantitative substantiation exist for better funding and a comprehensive range of educational pathways, including winding ones, and that an effective political campaign may be necessary to turn the tide.

At the January Presidents' Council meeting, FPSE endorsed the BC Federation of Labour's campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour. The BC current minimum wage is \$10.25 hour. Seven other Canadian provinces have higher

minimum wages. Even full-time workers earning the current minimum fall below the poverty line. A majority of people earning this wage are women, and a large percentage are over 25. Such low wages contribute to the need of thousands of students to go deeply into debt in order to pay for education. More information on the campaign and a chance to sign a petition can be found on the BC Fed web site- <http://bcfed.ca/>.

From the Executive:

1. I sent a letter (click [here](#) to read the letter) to the Chair of the Board of Governors in appreciation of the Board's stance towards ESL and ABE. There is little question that the understanding gained by Board members at the new Open Forum Board meetings contributed to the Board's action. The next such meeting will be on Monday, March 2, 2015. The topic will be education programming. I encourage everyone to attend and participate.
2. Judith Hunt spent nearly two grueling weeks in Vancouver as a key member of FPSE's Template Table Bargaining Committee. The resulting tentative agreement includes a cumulative though not monumental salary increase, important gains in benefits and possibly a foundation for significant improvements for non-regular faculty members down the road, achieved in a harsh bargaining environment. Judith has earned the gratitude of the membership for her dedication and her principled approach to bargaining. **Please note that changes to the collective agreement will not take effect until local bargaining is completed and the resulting agreement, common and local together, is ratified by the CCFA and the Employer.**
3. The Executive awarded the remaining \$1000 in this year's Charitable Donations budget to the African Awareness Committee to help pay the costs of shipping donated computers to schools in Ghana. Francis Adu-Febiri and Francis Yee, the organizers of the Committee, have sustained the AAC as a force for positive change in Africa since 2003. In addition to the funds for the AAC, the Executive allocated \$500 to the United Way, and another \$500 to the BCTF to assist teachers on strike in the fall. Thank you to all of the faculty members who submitted proposals. All were worthwhile. The range of proposals reflects the good will and concern of CCFA members for the community as a whole.
4. Along with the CUPE and BCGEU presidents, on January 19th I participated in a People Plan Committee meeting to discuss options for an engagement survey of College employees. Management participants were Joan Yates, Stephen Rempel, Sybil Harrison, and Barb Severyn. Nancy Sly chaired. The administration is leaning towards an instrument developed by BC Stats. Information about that instrument be made available to the Executive for review of the survey categories for their fit with the interests the CCFA. The survey will probably happen in the fall. An undecided issue is whether comments will be allowed. The term "engagement survey" has largely replaced "climate survey" for questionnaires used by employers to learn of the experience of employees.
5. The Executive hosted a lunch for new CCFA members who attended a New Employee Welcome organized by HR at Interurban on February 12th. Seven new faculty members took part. The lunch presented a chance to acquaint these new colleagues with the work of the CCFA and with some of the executive members. Who knows? Maybe someone's future work for the Union will be traced back to these first contacts.
6. The Executive is using surveys as a way to increase communication between the Executive and the rest of the membership and to encourage people who have not yet done so to participate in the work of the Union. The most recent survey was on participation on union committees. The results can be read [here](#). One obstacle to participation is the perceived lack of new people participating. There are actually quite a few people serving for the first time this year. In any case, the more people who come forward, the more new participants there will be. Thank you to everyone who responded. The Executive will consider your responses and suggestions.

Question for Faculty Members

We encourage your responses, however brief, to these questions and hope they will stimulate discussion within the CCFA. Responses will not be published without your consent.

What would you suggest the board consider in relation to education programming?

Write to me and let me know. Mark Kunen: Kunen@camosun.bc.ca

Fala português alguém?

Bruce McCormack (ELD) and Mavis Smith (Program Review and Renewal)



Camosun's relationship with Brazil, specifically the Instituto Federal Sul-rio-grandense (IFSul), continues to grow and is highly valued by both institutions.

The first seeds of this relationship were planted through connections that ACCC and CONIF (Conselho Nacional das Instituições da Rede Federal de Educação, the Brazilian national council of institutions of professional education, science, and technology) initiated to promote institutional partnerships between Canada and Brazil.

Tom Roemer, Camosun's Vice President of Strategic Development, has been fostering this relationship for a number of years, having made several trips to Brazil. In November 2013, I (Bruce) and Joyce van de Vegte, (Electronics and Computer Engineering), joined him in a visit to five colleges in southern Brazil.

At one of those colleges, in Pelotas, I received a request from IFSul to take part in a project needing English voices for animated films to be used for language instruction in Brazilian colleges. This Tri-lingual language project (e-Tec Idiomas Sem Fronteiras) offers language instruction in English, Portuguese, and Spanish with partners from Canada and Uruguay.

Once back in Canada, I recruited Camosun faculty and staff to be the voice actors for the first English module consisting of 18 episodes, centering on the story of a Brazilian girl, Rosa, who comes to Chicago to study English. Besides me, the other voices were played by Camosun people: Carl Lefebvre, Judith Hunt, and Mice Albano (ELD); Bronwen Welch and Raj Mehta (English); Anton Skinner; and Mavis, my co-author of this article.



Bruce, Judith, Anton, Bronwen, Mavis, Carl

The first 18 episodes were recorded in 12 sessions over a 6-month period with expert technical support from Anton.

The Brazilian animators created the film first, and then had

to apply our voices to the existing animation. This proved to be challenging, what with two teams working 12,000 km apart and never having met.

While the Brazilian team was very pleased to be working with native English speakers from Camosun, they began envisaging how much better it would be to work face-to-face with the voice actors in the recording studio in Brazil.

Initially, this idea seemed improbable, until Tom Roemer's ongoing development work with IFSul's Lia Pachalski (Advisor for International Affairs) led to a request from the Brazilians for the Camosun team to go there. The Brazilian government's firm commitment to education meant that they had the financial resources to fund a trip for a group of Camosun faculty to participate in an intensive one-week recording session.

This coincided with a planned trip by Tom Roemer, Jamie VanDenbossche (Manager, Applied Research and Innovation), and Jeff Stephen (Mechanical Engineering) to give a series of workshops on Camosun's applied learning practices (in such fields as Engineering) for IFSul.

Ultimately, four members of the voice-over team, Raj, Judith, Mavis, and I joined Tom, Jamie and Jeff on the long journey in October 2014 to Pelotas, a city in southern Brazil, near the Uruguayan border.



Hector, Tatiana, Lucia, Judith, Raj, Bruce, Mavis

On the first day, we watched episodes of the animation for the first module, which are now being used to teach English in Brazil. Seeing animated characters speaking with our voices brought it all to life for us.

We spent one entire week, including 3 twelve-hour days, working with Hector, Tatiana, and Lucia (the Brazilian project team) to record the voice-over for 18 episodes of a second module of animated videos. With this second module, we were able to complete in one week what had taken 6 months for the first module.

Being in the Brazilian recording studio proved to be very beneficial for the project. It enabled the IFSul project team

and us voice actors to work together closely, facilitating the script-editing process and permitting rehearsal and multiple re-takes. With the first module, it had been a challenge to do script editing from a distance with Portuguese script writers for whom English is a 2nd language. This problem was resolved by being on site. Moreover, the process of doing the voice-over before creating the animation was a significant improvement for the Brazilian animators.

The script, tailored as it is for a college-age clientele, is playful and engaging. It was quite amazing to discover the hidden voices inside each one of us. Judith Hunt, for example, plays 5 distinct characters, including one with a French accent. I (Bruce) play the role of Carlton, a bemused and confused college student seeking to discover the truth about his estranged father. Mavis plays the role of Sarah, a manipulative but good-hearted woman trying to deceive Carlton. Like Judith, Raj Mehta plays multiple roles, including a homeless person, a taxi driver, and a loopy gang member.

Having only received the scripts after arriving in Brazil, we soon realized that additional voices would be needed due to the large number of characters in the story. Enter Tom, Jamie, and Jeff, all of whom did a heroic job of learning the art of voice-over on the spot, on top of delivering an already full schedule of workshops.



Jamie had never done anything like this before, but we were able to coax the voice of a tough motorcycle gang member out of him that he didn't know he had.



Meanwhile, Jeff, who does have stage experience, pulled a number of voices out of his back pocket, which thrilled all of us.

Then, there was our VP of Strategic Development. Who knew that Tom Roemer could play both the perfect grumpy landlord and a demanding restaurant manager?



At the end of our time together, our gracious Brazilian hosts expressed their interest in our working together again, either in Brazil or in Canada.

It's also clear that IFSul would welcome other Camosun faculty exchanges in a variety of disciplines.

The IFSul Rector himself, Marcelo Bender Machado, extended an invitation to the Camosun community to



Horacio, Raj, Judith, Jamie, Jeff, Tom, Mavis, IFSul administrator, Bruce

learn Portuguese through the online program that has been developed for this language project.

Talvez seja hora de todos nós começamos a aprender Português . . .

My Anti-Homework Crusade

Erin Waugh, ACC, CPCC

When my kids were in elementary school, I was tasked with reading *The Homework Myth* by Alfie Kohn for the parenting class I helped facilitate. I was eager to read the book and subsequently present to the group of 80+ parents taking the course on what I learned.

In *The Homework Myth*, Alfie Kohn argues that homework in itself does nothing to improve young children's learning and in fact can contribute to a negative experience of school and learning to such an extent that kids begin to dislike the learning itself. Mr. Kohn cites studies which demonstrate that for younger children, homework does little for their long term retention of things like spelling and grammar. He writes at length about kids with learning disabilities or struggles at home being asked to do more of what they don't understand- adding to their frustration and discouragement. The gist of his book is that homework for kids in the early years of school is not necessary and can be detrimental.

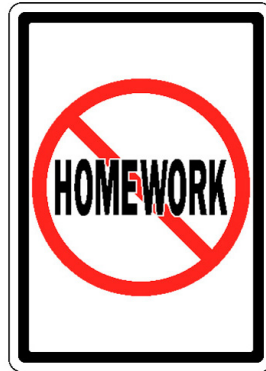
At the time, my kids were in grades 4 and 6 and I was seeing the impact of what I call 'busy work' on our evenings. My children are pretty smart, are quick to pick up concepts, and are eager learners. They were involved in extra-curricular sports and arts pursuits, and we valued the time after all of that to connect as a family. Why, then, were we spending an hour or more in the evenings colouring maps and completing math worksheets? There were "mad minute" math quiz practices and dictes to study for. There were what felt like gargantuan projects with display boards and more often than not, my kids, tired from a day in the world, collapsed in tears, yelling 'I HAVE to get this done...my TEACHER said!!!!' My

kids were acting like workaholics. It was alarming.

Young kids are disadvantaged by the teacher/student relationship, believing that their teacher has ultimate power. They are too young to understand that the mark on a grade 3 spelling test isn't as important as it seems, especially when their teacher tells them to study hard to do well. On top of the toll it was taking on the kids, it occurred to me that I was letting their teachers dictate how my evenings and weekends were being spent, and that my time with my children was being annexed for a goal I was unclear on. I realized that as difficult as it was for me to be "that mom", I needed to get in there and set some boundaries for my kids.

When I asked the teacher in passing what the objective of the homework was, I was told that it was school policy that children do 20 minutes of homework each evening for every grade they were in. By grade 5, that meant an expectation of an hour and forty minutes each evening. WHOA...really? That's a lot of time when they've been in school all day. I asked the principal about it, who told me it was a ministry guideline they were following. I searched the ministry website for homework and found nothing. Despite what I was being told, "homework" is not mentioned in the curriculum for any grade.

I pushed further and I was told that my children were being "prepared" for middle and high school, where they would be expected to do homework for marks. Really? For an activity on MY time where there is no intended learning outcome? Nope, I wasn't buying it. I took things into my own hands and scheduled a meeting with son's teacher. I told her that while I had the utmost respect for her many years of experience and her obvious dedication to the kids, I was not going to allow her to annex our evenings. If he wasn't working or paying attention in class and had work to finish, that was something we could talk about; however, I asked her NOT to send home work for him to do to practice concepts or skills he already knew. If she did, I offered, I'd come to her classroom with my deck of cards to play with my son for an equivalent period of time during the school day. If there were projects, there would have to be a justification for the work being completed at home. Without this, I expected her to provide time in class for him to complete the projects. She was surprised – expecting me to cite how hard it is on my kids, or how I'm not able to help, or well, something other than the idea of not allowing her that much control over our family time. We reached an agreement and my son didn't receive a lot of homework from her that year.



In the meantime, my daughter had started middle school, and after two months I noticed she was working on homework for more than two hours every evening. So, after school, and dance and dinner, she would start homework at 7 or 8 and still be working at 10 or 11. She was a wreck. When I asked the principal about it, I was told that her teacher had had pneumonia and on her return, was trying to "catch the kids up." I had reached a state of anger that bordered on psychotic, and while I didn't yell, I told him that my 12 year old wasn't responsible for the teacher's illness and her lost teaching time. I appeared calm, but just beneath the surface was the kind of fury that he could see wasn't to be trifled with. The teacher was asked to revise her teaching plan so the kids wouldn't have to cram 4 months of projects into two months.

I raised my children to seek balance – an active lifestyle is as important as school as is playtime and downtime. My workday can be long and at the end of it, I'm tired. I'm lucky that my employer is reasonable and that I have a job where the expectation is that I'll take breaks during the day and leave my work at work in the evenings. Because of that, I am able to be engaged with my work and pursue other things when my work is done. Why would I expect that my children, especially when they were young, should go to school during the day and then do more of that work in the evening or on the weekend? The reality is that most kids need evenings to be active, to find out what they like outside of school, to play, and to relax.

I believe that because I advocated for their freedom from homework, my kids took more responsibility for their learning. School became THEIRS, and they have impressed me with their ability to manage the workload despite a range of time consuming outside interests. I've also noticed that fewer teachers are handing out homework as a matter of course, and so my children have grown; they are more engaged in the classroom and have their evenings to pursue other things. Maybe they would have reached this stage on their own, but I like to think that some of it was my standing by my values and taking control over my time with them.

So think about it as your kids navigate the school system. What kind of experience of learning do you want for them? Once you're clear on that, be an advocate and be in control of your family time. Guard it with your life. I guarantee you won't remember the marks they got in the third grade, but you will remember the times you got to see them really enjoy learning new things and laughing with you and finding their passions. Be "that parent". You won't regret it.

Not Just a Union Geek

Debbie Gascoyne, English

The Five (or more) Young Adult Novels Everyone Should Read

When I'm not working for the union, I teach English, and my own specialty is 20th Century novels, but especially Children and Young Adult novels, even more especially fantasy. Young Adult (YA) is big these days. It is the source material for many blockbuster movies (The Hunger Games! Twilight!), and a more-reliable-than-most source of revenue for publishing companies struggling to cope in a new world of the internet and self-publishing. Adults have discovered that YA novels can be not only entertaining, but also often just as challenging as many so-called "adult" novels. Many of you may have children or teenagers at home, but the books I'm recommending here are ones I would recommend (and have) to anyone. I started with five authors; often I couldn't resist recommending more than one book by the same author. Here, in no particular order, are my choices:

Diana Wynne Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*. Diana Wynne Jones is one of the best writers of children's fantasy, period. Many, if not most, of her books (for example, her "Chrestomanci" series) are what I would classify as "children's" books rather than YA, but *Fire and Hemlock* falls confidently into YA territory. It is rich, and strange, and complex, and has an ending that people have been arguing about for years. The structure is back-to-front and inside-out, and it riffs on T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" as well as the ballad of Tam Lin. It's about love and friendship and when to hold on and when to let go, and it's wonderful.

If you want something by the same author, but a bit less challenging, try *Howl's Moving Castle*, which is just a whole lot of fun.

John Green, *The Fault in Our Stars*. Okay, believe the hype. John Green is one of the rock stars of YA literature and truly deserves to be. Man, can this guy write. I would highly recommend almost any of his books, but you should check this one out if only because it's so popular, because it's great to read a popular novel that is also really, really well written. It is honest and true and takes an amazingly clear-eyed and unsentimental look at its subject: young people dying of cancer. There's a movie, too, which is sweet, but not quite as good as the book. This one will make you cry (not as shamelessly as the movie does), but in a good way. If you want something equally amazing but less sad, try *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson* by John Green and David Levithan, which is hilarious as well as touching.

Elizabeth Wein, *Code Name Verity*. A young woman has been arrested as a spy in France during WW2, and is being tortured. The narrative alternates between her story and the story of two young women from very different backgrounds who become friends in wartime England. I can't say more without spoilers; suffice it to say that ultimately this packs a devastating punch, while exploring the nature of friendship and the different kinds of heroism.

Megan Whelan Turner, *The Thief*. I've tried to give you only stand-alone novels, but this is the first of a series

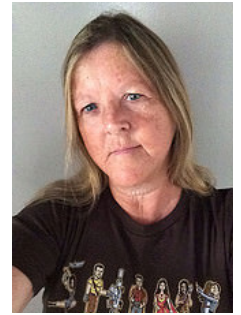
that is well worth following up.

When I was at a Diana Wynne Jones conference some years ago, and people were suggesting authors to read if you'd read all of Diana Wynne Jones, Turner's name was one that kept coming up. This one has a bonafide unreliable narrator, and every book in the series is worth reading as a study in tightly controlled point-of-view. Again, I can't say much more in case of spoilers.

Melina Marchetta, *Saving Francesca*. Marchetta is a best-selling Australian author, best known for another novel: *Looking for Alibrandi*. I liked that one, but it didn't blow me away. *Saving Francesca* did. It's about love, and life, and family and friendship, and despair and hope and the whole damn thing. If you want another, equally amazing, book by the same author that features a young man rather than a young woman, try *The Piper's Son*, which is kind of a sequel to *Saving Francesca* but could be read as a stand-alone as well.

Special bonus extra that I added at the last minute: *This One Summer* by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. This one's a graphic novel, and it's beautiful. It's also a sweet, true and haunting slice of life.

There are so many other possibilities! I'd love to hear from others who enjoy YA novels as much as I do, and from anyone who'd like more suggestions. Happy reading.



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