

FA Executive July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2015

President:	Jacqueline Holler
Vice-President:	Erik Jensen
Past President:	Lee Keener
Secretary & Member-at-Large	
SLI representative:	Julie Howard
Treasurer:	Wendy Fellers
Members-at -Large:	
Faculty representatives	Ken Prkachin
	Stephen Rader
	Matt Reid
Librarian representative	Eleanor Annis
Term representative	Jason Morris
Grievance Officer:	Fiona MacPhail
Executive Director:	Donna Plourde



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Jacqueline Holler, President UNBC-FA
Associate Professor and Chair, History Program*

Greetings to all members, and welcome to what will be a very important semester for the UNBC-FA. As many of you already know, the UNBC-FA Executive has voted to launch a certification drive, and this drive began on Monday 20 January. What this means is that all members will be asked to sign a card indicating that you desire to have the association certified under the BC Labour Board to represent you and your fellow UNBC-FA faculty. If 45 percent (or more) of members sign cards within 90 days, the UNBC-FA can apply to the board for certification. The board will then examine the applications and arrange a secret-ballot vote. All members will then have the right to vote on the question of certification. If the majority votes in favour of certification, the UNBC-FA will be certified.



Newsletter Highlights:

- *President's Message*
- *Launch of the UNBC-FA Certification Drive*



Certification Day
Tuesday, January 28, 2014

10:00 – 1:00 pm
Faculty Association Office
Drop-in Open House

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Panel Presentation & Discussion
Senate Chambers

Certification Drop-in Open House
Faculty Association Office
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

January 30, February 13,
March 6, March 20

Spring General Meeting
Friday, March 21, 2014
12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to discussion of certification. Many of you attended the town-hall announcement on 20 January, and heard more about certification there. I urge you also to attend the panel discussion on Tuesday to hear from our guest speakers and have your questions answered. Open-house drop-in sessions at the FA Boardroom will take place regularly until the drive is concluded. Other sources of information include our website, where FAQs and supporting information will be posted on an ongoing basis; and our certification committee, a group of trained and dedicated volunteers who are willing to meet one-on-one to answer questions and discuss the issue with you.

The decision to seek certification is a momentous one for the Association, even though most of our friends and colleagues at other universities in Canada are already members of certified unions. It is important that all members understand and discuss the issue. We thought you might also like to know the thoughts of those who are involved with negotiations, those involved in certification, and those who have led the Association in the past. So in this newsletter you'll find statements of support from the UNBC-FA's former presidents, from Rob Clift of CUFA-BC, and from our hardworking Certification Committee.

Speaking as the most recent president of the UNBC-FA, I can say to you that I feel a firm conviction that certification is the right step for us at this time. I'm not

one of the “founders” as many of you (and many members of our Certification Committee) are. But I feel a strong (and even irrational) commitment to this special place. I was in my MA program when UNBC opened, and when I heard about it I told myself and others: “I want to work there.” In 2003, with a PhD, a postdoc, and a couple of babies under my belt, I heard a position had opened. I thought I’d died and gone to heaven when I got the nod.

I still feel like there’s a little bit of heaven about this place, especially when I’m in my office watching the sun come up (far to the south at this time of year) and the sky turns rosy behind the dark band of spruce between my window and the Northern Sports Centre. I love the beauty of this place nestled in the boreal forest; the diverse students and the teaching relationships our small size enables; and most of all the collegiality and commitment that you all demonstrate on a daily basis. But I also worry about the future. There are serious issues before us: the grinding workload many face and its effect on our research and our personal lives; the challenges our part-time members face despite, in many cases, their long service to UNBC; the growing managerial culture at the institution that forces us to increasingly defend academic work in a context where faculty seem to be an inconvenience or a “cost” rather than, with students, the heart of the university; what seems an increasing neglect of Senate and the other instruments of collegial governance; and our badly out-of-step salaries, which seem to concern the institution very little. We have learned the limits of our power to effect positive change through the mechanisms now at our disposal. And so I support certification to enable us to defend and enhance not only our working conditions, but the academic mission of the university.



Darwyn Coxson

Past President and Past Chief Negotiator, UNBC-FA
Professor, University of Northern British Columbia

Since arriving at UNBC in 1993 I have been a member of 3 bargaining teams, including negotiations for our first Faculty Agreement in 1994. In that first bargaining round both University management and the Faculty Association were trying to join the B.C. Research University mainstream. The Faculty Association registered as a group under the Societies Act, adopting a constitution very much like that of UBC. After a year’s bargaining we created a so-called framework agreement, where we set out in contract law some of the rights that are conferred upon unions when they are certified under the B.C. Labour Relations Code. These included rights to represent members as their bargaining unit, rights to dues check-offs, and rights to grievance and arbitration procedures. In following this path of trying to create union-like rights, while not being a union, we were adopting a pattern set many years earlier in B.C., when faculty were prohibited by legislation from

unionizing. Although that prohibition had long since expired when UNBC was formed, we followed established practice at the time.



<http://web.unbc.ca/~wetbelt/gallery.htm>

Fast forward 20 years. Our ability to enforce contract rights through access to the courts or arbitration has proven to be both cumbersome and expensive. In our most recent bargaining round UNBC management refused to provide any response to many of the articles tabled. On sick leave, where we convincingly showed that UNBC sick leave provisions were the worst in the country, we had no response over a 2 year period. Only at arbitration did we finally get a reply. The Association, however, had limited options to challenge this failure of UNBC management to bargain in good faith. We could have taken legal action in the courts or filed a grievance before an arbitrator. Eventually, the Faculty Association opted to end the so-called bargaining round and seek arbitration. However, that process has been very expensive and now enters its second year since the application was first made.

If we had been certified as a union the options would have been quite different. A complaint to the Labour Relation Board would have been heard quickly before a tribunal, with a ruling likely to have compelled the University to start bargaining in good faith. Similar issues have been faced at other B.C. research Universities. Tellingly, at UBC, where the concept of the framework agreement was pioneered, they abandoned this approach in 2000 to be voluntarily recognized under the B.C. Labour Relations Board and gain access to rights enshrined in B.C. labour legislation. The University of Victoria, similarly, is now holding a ballot to determine if its members wish to certify and SFU is poised to take similar action.

The time has come for UNBC Faculty Association members to abandon the approach of bargaining under a framework agreement as a group registered under the societies act. In the face of an administration that refuses to bargain in good faith UNBC Faculty Association members need access to the legal rights

afforded under the B.C. Labour Relation code. I firmly believe that having these rights will improve the atmosphere at the bargaining table, compelling UNBC management to participate in good faith. This was the recent experience at Royal Roads University, where certification enabling successful conclusion of a first Faculty Agreement.

The University will no doubt face future challenges. However, the status quo, where UNBC management refuses to sit down and discuss how we can solve issues of common concern (or even acknowledge those issues) cannot continue. I would encourage you to sign a card indicating your willingness to join a certified UNBC Faculty Association.



Lee Keener

Past-President, UNBC-FA

Professor, University of Northern British Columbia



Photo courtesy of UNBC

I have followed carefully the course of FA – administration negotiations since we obtained our first agreement almost twenty years ago and in two cases have been a negotiator. The last round of negotiations has left me disappointed and dismayed by the deterioration in the level of respect shown our association team. Furthermore, even the most favourable outcome of the arbitration process will still leave us as one of the most poorly compensated faculty groups in Canada. Heretofore I have not been an especially enthusiastic supporter of certification. But the situation has changed since the early days when I felt we were equal partners at the table. The costs of regular arbitration are certainly not sustainable. I see certification as the only clear remedy for these problems

and wholeheartedly support the current campaign to certify.

Cheers, Lee



Ken Prkachin

Past-President, UNBC-FA

Professor, University of Northern British Columbia

I've grown used to hearing colleagues preface their support for certification with a disclaimer; something to the effect of "I'm not the kind of person who runs to the barricades." Nor am I, but having had a father who was black-listed for union activity in the mines of Manitoba in the 1930's and narrowly avoided deportation as a consequence, I have always been sympathetic to the concept of collective organization. I was quite heavily involved in the formation of the UNBCFA in 1993 and in those days there was substantial debate about the relative merits of an association or a union. To this day, I am not sure how a certification vote would have turned out, but we did not go that route. I have carefully watched every round of negotiations since then and been actively involved in two. Although we have had some of our smartest and most effective members working tirelessly and advocating on our behalf we find ourselves now twenty years later, frankly, in a bad position. It is not just that our salaries are embarrassingly out-of-line. We have also been unable to make significant progress on other core issues that affect not only our working conditions but also the university's ability to truly fulfil its role. In my view the most important of these is the establishment of teaching workload expectations and support structures that are consistent with the concept of a "research intensive" university. In the past, the University's team would at least express sympathy around these issues. Now, it appears, they are unwilling even to address them.



Photo courtesy of UNBC

We have had twenty years of creeping erosion of our autonomy, the imposition of procedures and policies that place barriers in the way of doing our work and expansion of administration. The only way that I can see to correct all these trends is to have the power that certification brings to enforce good-faith bargaining.



Margaret Seguin Anderson

Past President, UNBC-FA
Professor Emeritus, University of Northern British
Columbia

know about Faculty Association work from the wise leadership of Lee Keener and Darwyn Coxson. I know that this wise leadership continues today as you make this important decision regarding certification. I wish you the best of luck as you move forward.

Sincerely,
Kate Lawson

Dear Faculty Association members,
As a past-president of the UNBC-FA I write to you to encourage members to give careful consideration to the proposal to unionize. In the past, faculty have often objected to the idea of unionization on the grounds that it would undermine the highly-valued ideal of collegiality. It seems clear to me, however, that in the present climate, the ideal of collegial governance of the university is a mirage that serves only to weaken the position of faculty. Having participated in provincial and national faculty association meetings when I was on the executive, I saw that associations elsewhere in BC and Canada that had elected to unionize gained strength to support the crucial role of faculty in their institutions, as well as in the ability to successfully negotiate their conditions of work and their compensation. I urge you to discuss the issue with your colleagues with an open mind. I am retired now, but if I were still an active faculty member I believe that I would sign up. Best wishes as you make this decision.
Cheers.



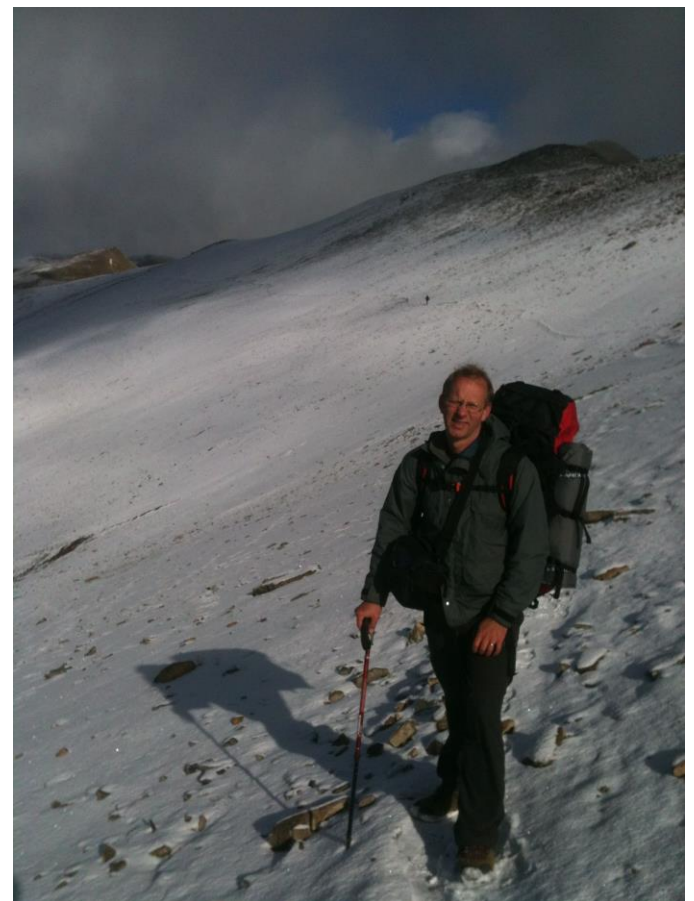
Ted Binnema

2012 UNBC-FA Negotiations Committee &
2014 UNBC-FA Chief Negotiator
Professor , University of Northern British Columbia



Kate Lawson

Past-President, UNBC-FA
Associate Professor, University of Waterloo
President,
Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations



Dear Friends and Former Colleagues:
I remember the friendships I forged during my time at UNBC with great fondness and always follow developments there with great interest. I was thus delighted to be asked by Jacqueline to add my voice to discussions of your up-coming certification vote.

UNBC-FA's strengths have always been the solidarity of its membership and its ability to rise to meet the challenges it faces. These challenges are now particularly acute in the post-secondary sector, what with attacks on research funding, the denigration of teaching, assaults on academic freedom, and underfunding generally. Concomitant with these challenges are the attacks on labour and labour rights that have become commonplace in Canada today. While I am not aware of all of the circumstances that have led you to contemplate certification now, I am confident that you have weighed all of your options and have determined that this is the best way forward for the UNBC-FA.

I, like most faculty members in Canadian universities, am not a trade unionist by nature; and I have only slowly come to understand that certification will enhance the ability to the faculty to maintain the excellence of UNBC as an institution, just as certified faculty associations do elsewhere in Canada. In contrast to Darwyn Coxon, I have experienced only one round of negotiations, but that round firmly convinced me that certifying ought to improve—not undermine—respectful and healthy relations between faculty and administration at UNBC, and to improve the ability to the university to achieve its stated vision and mission. Take an opportunity to read the stated vision and mission of UNBC:

On a personal note, I may say that I learned almost all I

Our Vision

To be a student-centered, research-intensive university, uniquely northern and personal in character, responsive to the region we serve, and of national and international acclaim.

Our Mission

To improve the quality of life in our region, province and world by attaining the highest standards of undergraduate and graduate teaching, learning, and research. To serve our vast region by nurturing relationships and being innovative, resourceful and responsive to student and community needs.

I have no doubt that most members of the faculty association are exceptionally capable and dedicated to achieving the vision and mission of UNBC. And I believe that after certification, the Faculty Association will be in a better position to guard and protect that mission for the good of its own members, for the good of the university more broadly, and for the good of northern British Columbia.



Erik Jensen

Chair, Certification Committee
Vice-President, UNBC-FA

Professor, University of Northern British Columbia

One part of the reason that I chose to come to UNBC from the University of Windsor was the challenge of helping to create a new University. There was and

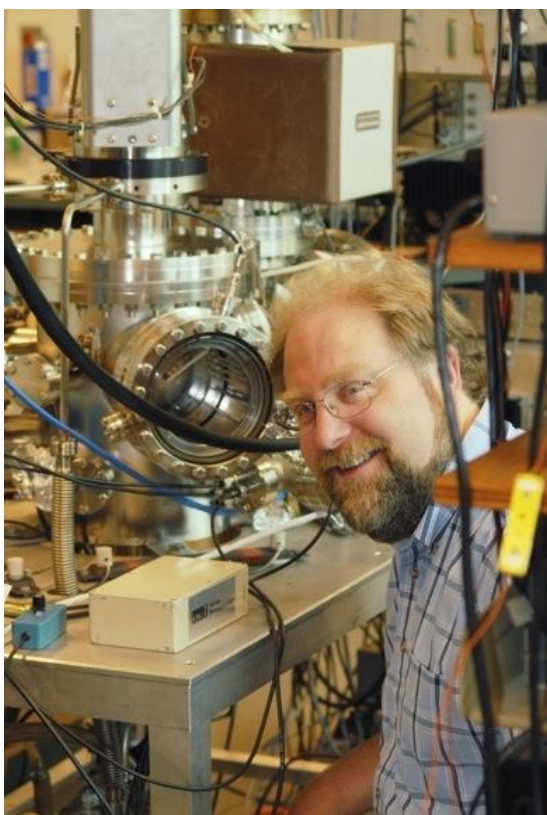


Photo courtesy of UNBC

continues to be real enthusiasm for what UNBC represents and the difference that a University can make for its communities. I served on the UNBC Senate for 10 years and have been a member of the Faculty Association Executive twice— many years ago in its early stage and now for the past 3 years serving as Vice-President.

I am growing increasingly concerned about the erosion of academic influence at the core of decision making in the University. For many years we took such developments as “growing pains” of a new institution, but I believe that now we are a mature institution and what we are seeing are developments that impede academic influence at many levels and an institutional attitude that dismisses legitimate academic needs and concerns.

We are not alone in this at UNBC- these same trends are happening across Canada. The question is how we, as faculty, can best move forward to exert a positive influence on the development of our University— to maintain and to grow its academic reputation. I see the certification effort as one essential part of this task in ensuring that academic faculty remain at the core of governance of the University. This is why I decided to Chair the certification committee.



DO PROFESSIONALS UNIONIZE?

Robert F. Clift, Executive Director
Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC

In the debate as to whether university faculty members should form unions, the assertion is often made that as professionals, faculty members don't need unions. Their expertise, performance and reputation give them all the power they need to successfully navigate the vagaries of university administrators. Not so.

Although this may have once been the case, it bears little resemblance to the reality of 2014. An extremely small number of “superstars” still wield such power. For the other 98% of university faculty members -- make no mistake -- senior university administrators think of you as employees, not as professionals.

This change in the attitude of senior administrators has come about gradually. A number of external and internal pressures have shifted them away from being “facilitators” of the academic enterprise to becoming its “controllers”. As a consequence of this shift, university administration has itself become a profession and its practitioners act as if their profession is of greater status and importance than that of a university faculty member. “I know what's best for the university” is one the six impossible things senior university administrators must believe before breakfast (with apologies to Lewis Carroll). The corollary to this is that faculty members, notwithstanding their professionalism and good

intentions, cannot be trusted to make the big decisions. This is despite the fact that before being anointed a senior administrator, most of these people were themselves faculty members.

Through the senior administrators' looking glass, "we have to cut the program to save the program" makes perfect sense. As do the ideas that measurement and action are synonymous, and that faculty members should be able to "do more with less".

These problems are not unique to the university enterprise. They are endemic to a public sector struggling with increasing demands and stagnant or decreasing resources. The situation in other sectors is equally troubling. Consequently, other professions have formed unions or union-like organizations to protect both individual rights to fairness and the professionalism of their members.

For example, the BC Medical Association, the BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association, and the Trial Lawyers' Association of BC are, in some of their functions, indistinguishable from unions.

The Professional Association of [Medical] Residents, the Directors' Guild, and the Airline Pilots' Association are all legally-recognized unions.

Thousands of well-educated professionals are represented by the Professional Employees' Association, the Health Sciences Association and the BC Government and Service Employees' Union.

Forming a union will not turn back the clock to the good old days of senior administrators respecting the professionalism of faculty members and facilitating, rather than trying to control, teaching and research. It will, however, slow down the erosion of professional authority and academic freedom and give faculty members new legal tools to fight the individual and collective battles ahead.

Robert F. Clift is the Executive Director of the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC. He is also a doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia with expertise in the politics, governance, management and history of higher education.

UNBC-FA Certification Committee:

Eric Jensen, *Chair*
 Bruce Bidgood
 Jenia Blair
 Raymond Cox
 Wendy Fellers
 Art Fredeen
 Waqar Haque
 Luke Harris
 Dawn Hemingway
 Jacqueline Holler
 Peter Jackson
 Lee Keener
 Brian Menounos
 Umesh Parshotam
 Ken Prkachin
 Stephen Rader
 Glen Schmidt
 Jon Swainger
 Lela Zimmer/Catharine Schiller
 Donna Plourde



Photo courtesy of UNBC