

THE NUFA NEWS

NUFA Communications Committee

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On Solidarity in Times of Crisis

by *Toivo Koivukoski*

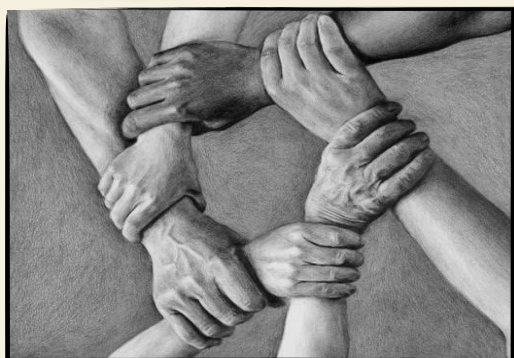
They must be convinced that an invincible force lives in the people which nothing and no one can withstand; and that if this force has not yet emancipated the people it is because it is powerful only when it is unified and acting everywhere at the same time, in concert, with one aim, and until now it has not been unified. (1)

Collegial Governance or a Managerial Ethos?

Over the years that I have been a part of Nipissing University I think we have witnessed a trend in modes of organization, coupled with a shifting culture of governance: from the collegial governance that has been past custom towards what might be called a managerial ethos. We saw this in the undoing of an Academic Senate of the whole, in the deployment of parallel governance bodies and processes not accountable to Senate, and in the termination of limited term faculty appointments on the basis of expediency and without meaningful consultation with those programs affected. If we are to think about what is happening here at our University in a systemic sense, then we should acknowledge that this set of changes represents a more general and pervasive corporatization of the University as such, with educational institutions such as ours influenced by an evidently unstable economic system and a concomitant spirit of austerity, coupled with crises of our own making. (2)

Considering how privileged our University is, with benefactors in government, students, and families, and given the generational trust that is placed in us for the continuance and production of knowledge, what we do in our teaching, research, and service is certainly affected by the social context within which we find ourselves. And yet that trust in the value of higher education depends not only upon our capacity to fulfill the expectations that families have for their children and that government has for the betterment of society, but also to question what is worth knowing, and what is meant by a better society. In this sense, our mandate must be a critical one, with how we organize and direct the intellectual energies of our University not simply a complacent register of the prevailing winds of the season, but rather serving as a model for how things might be done differently.

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On Solidarity in Times of Crisis (continued)

With all of the amazing fecundity of intelligence that belongs at our University, ours is a perfect place to deepen commitments to democratic modes of decision-making. Our core academic principles are suited to this end, with the standards of peer-review, academic freedom and academic autonomy being naturally affiliated with democratic principles, namely that any claim to authority must give an account of itself, and that authority is a mandate received from the people who recognize it. These core principles and practices are not impediments to effective decision-making; rather, they are the grounds for good decisions, where by “good” I mean both that they draw on the expertise of faculty, and that the decisions taken become the autonomous expressions of those who will work within their dictates.

Inasmuch as people live, work and act within a frame collectively chosen, their energies and talents will be given more fulsome expression if they do what they do as expressions of a shared autonomous will. These are the political conditions for solidarity, wherein one finds common purpose with others not through the suppression of individual interests and desires, but through the voluntary, collaborative engagement in shaping the terms of the community we share in. This is why collegial governance is foundational for the health of our University, because it creates the conditions of possibility not only for well-considered outcomes, but also for the active engagement of the people who make up this place, feeling as if we belong in the sense that every person is of value, not as a “basic income unit” or row in a budget ledger, but as a voice that can help in articulating who we are collectively, a person who is of value both intrinsically in themselves and as a part of the larger whole.

Clearly, deepening our commitment to democracy on the modest scale of collegial governance runs at odds with corporate models of organization. To the extent that leadership in the model of a Chief Executive Officer gains its mandate from performance, it is a measure of efficiency in resource allocation that prevails, with employees considered as one resource and variable cost of operation among others. (There is perhaps no encouragement more grim than that given to graduating students in the oft-heard platitude that they are the future’s most valuable resource. Pity for that kind of future.) Responsiveness of leadership in a corporate sense means responsiveness to changing economic climates of supply and demand, with flexibility of decision making valued in order to adapt to market instabilities.

And though the corporation and today’s capitalist economic system may be unique to our time, the pervasive threads of hierarchy, subordination, and centralized powers of decision are perennial in human history. In the crisis and turmoil of the Peloponnesian War, the general Cleon is said to have complained about the indecision and mass sentiments that affected Athens’ direct democracy, lamenting that “democracy is incapable of running an empire” (3). Thankfully for the demos, Cleon may well have been right. For if the aim is control, and the means are division and fear, then the constitutive deliberations that make a democracy what it is are indeed counterproductive. Long consideration of decisions to be made, meaningful consultations with those affected, and the accountability of leaders to their people can perhaps seem like hassles, but they are worthwhile travails inasmuch as they clarify the terms of consent and engender feelings of solidarity among those involved.

(continued on p. 3)

On Solidarity in Times of Crisis (continued)

Given the crises that have rattled our institution of higher learning, that kind of sense of common purpose has clearly suffered. Chairs of Departments and Program Coordinators duty bound to advocate for their academic units begin to look with suspicion on the successes of others, seen as gains made at the expense of their own. Interdisciplinarity may appear liberating as knowledge is explored across the often imagined borders between fields of study, but when it is connected with resourcing new programs, the much more mercenary set of concerns about who gets a new position can bully out collegiality in curriculum development. When policy decisions are taken in a spirit of crisis, for example, as has happened here in the past in limiting freedom of assembly and expression to “free speech zones” on campus, accountability is only regained when that black box of policy formation is opened up in a chorus cry for responsive academic leadership. People quite naturally desire a say in the decisions that shape their daily work, and to the extent that we can conserve these forums for public deliberation – be they Academic Senate and its Committees, Faculty Councils, the Board of Governors, or even as modest a technological means as the “Everybody” email – we can feel engaged in the mission of our University as common cause. But when that feeling of solidarity premised on collegial governance is abrogated in order to push through contentious dictates, one would expect a very different institutional culture to emerge, characterized by divisiveness, suspicion, and incredulity.

Our leadership from senior Academic Administrators at present appears more cogent than we have suffered through in the past, but memories of crisis still linger, and are given new animus each time we are forced to respond to a new economic shock or change in government policy. How we respond to these kinds of exigencies ought to be judged not solely based on outcomes measured as on a balance sheet, but also in terms of the manner in which the decisions themselves are taken. This is where questions of governance become matters of principle. Commitment to the principle of collegial governance is front and center in our Faculty Union’s efforts in bargaining for a better deal. What would make the conservation and deepening of this principle in practice truly “better” both for Faculty and for the University as a whole is fealty to democracy and dedication to establishing informed consent. These are foundations for a decent, free and open society, capable of cultivating energies of voluntary association and a spirit of willing solidarity. These are strengths well suited to this place, a University where every person feels as if they belong to the extent that every person can contribute their voice, hopefully to the end of affirming consent to the terms of our collective agreement, but if that is not readily forthcoming, then in saying “No” so as to assert our collective will and to make our University a place that we can be proud to be a part of.

- (1) Michael Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy” *The Essential Works of Anarchism*, Marshall S. Shatz (ed.) (New York: Bantam, 1971) 182
- (2) Naomi Klein explores the relation between crisis and violent institutional change in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, (New York: Picador, 2007)
- (3) Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Hammond translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 3.37

Interview with Amanda Burk, NUFA Vice President

Amanda Burk was interviewed for the NUFA News by Sarah Winters

What has been your previous experience with unions in general and did such experience, if any, lead you to serve on NUFA?

Before joining NUFA this year I had always had an interest but also somewhat of a reservation about unions—I think that comes from the artistic side of my practice and my research where things that appear to be “Group Think” have always seemed a bit disconcerting. Visual arts is a field that prizes the individual and working as an artist can be quite a solitary activity. But I think that what has happened in my time here at Nipissing (I’ve been here for six years now) is that I feel a deeper and deeper connection to the people and to the place, and a desire for us to work together to make it the best institution possible. Certainly being on Senate for a number of years (including being Deputy Speaker and serving on the Bylaws and Planning and Priorities Committees) was one way of learning the deeper workings of the institution and so working with NUFA seemed like another step. So I think now more than ever I feel the need for, and I’m going to use Union terminology here, solidarity and working together. We are only as strong as our Association—and in recognizing this I knew that I needed to contribute and to work as a member of NUFA.

Have you had previous experience with NUFA specifically?

Not specifically, so I have come to it on a different path from that which I expect different NUFA members have taken. I didn’t take on this role lightly but the opportunity was there so I made the decision to take the leap and work really hard at it.

To learn by doing?

Exactly. And the current executive is very supportive. I’m learning from the strengths of other members who’ve been involved a lot longer than I have.

It sounds like you’ve been inspired by people rather than by concepts?

I would say so. I mean I’m certainly learning concepts too—through people and reading. But it’s certainly the people who have been inspiring. It’s a lot to live up to, and a lot to aspire to.

Why and how did you take on the VP position?

I think in previous years I probably would not have taken it on, but this year the timing seemed right and ultimately I wanted to be more involved. I wanted to contribute my energy towards something that would have positive impact at Nipissing and I was interested in the opportunity to connect more broadly with my colleagues. Working at the Monastery, although picturesque, can be isolating.

Even though this position entails service to others, you’re speaking as if it’s also a gift to you?

Yes, it is service in that we’re working towards trying to get the best working conditions for everyone but it would be misleading to say there wasn’t personal benefit involved too. I am grateful that this position affords me the opportunity to interact and connect with colleagues from other disciplines. Life is more interesting as a result and it gets me out of my comfort zone.

You’ve taken it on in a Bargaining Year, which is not like non-Bargaining years, so how has that affected you?

Definitely it’s a trial by fire. I’m not at the Bargaining Table but I’ve been watching other Members at work. A Bargaining Year makes everything more intense and impresses on me the importance of the roles we all play. I’ve certainly witnessed the long hours the members of the Collective Bargaining Committee (CBC) have put in, and the loss of sleep that results from giving so much thought to the issues on the table.

Interview with Amanda Burk, NUFA Vice President (Continued)

Those of us who are not on CBC are certainly trying to give them support. I've also been working with the Strike Preparedness Committee and it's been nice to be a bridge between this group and the Exec and to see how everyone has really been rising to the occasion.

What are the usual duties of the VP role?

Shadowing the President but also taking care of things that the President, as busy as the President is, doesn't always have time to do. I work with the Standing Committees, I am a member of the Grievance Committee, and I am a member of the OCUFA Board of Directors.

What's been your biggest surprise so far?

Good question. Perhaps the fact that I'm seeing the human aspect in the language of policy and procedure. We're always referring back to our Constitution and the Collective Agreement and it's been an enjoyable process because of the people involved. There's often someone who will lighten the moment, someone who will bring new insight and although the process concerns something quite structured, I think the way that it is handled is fascinating.

So your biggest surprise was a nice surprise, not a nasty surprise?

Yeah, it is a nice surprise. I think I'm also surprised at all the work that Angela does and how important that role that she plays is. I don't know how we did it before her.

You might have already answered my next question, which was "what was the best part of the job?" You would say the best part was "the people"?

Yes, it is, it is. And I think also the opportunity of speaking to Members in a new way, to be able to be a liaison, to be able to reassure in certain moments, to be able to say "there will be updates coming." That kind of communication is so important for what we do—to keep the Members informed.

Do you see the NUFA work as having a relationship to your field of research and teaching in the Fine Arts?

On the broadest level, we are here to teach and NUFA is here to support faculty in being able to do their jobs. More specifically, NUFA is about communication and visibility, and I feel that visual arts are really relevant to that. I also feel that the work I'm doing with NUFA often draws upon the same kind of non-linear thinking and creative problem-solving that we use in the visual arts.

Do you have a favourite artwork that speaks to you about unions or labour movements?

Recently I was watching a documentary on Vic Muniz called *Waste Land*. Muniz is a high profile contemporary artist and in this documentary he develops a project where he works with garbage pickers in Brazil. During the project, Muniz works with these individuals to create images of themselves out of the garbage, but what I found really interesting was that these individuals, who were living such challenging lives—existing on the bottom rung of society—had unionized. It was remarkable to see how the union over time was able to effect positive and dramatic changes in people's lives.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

My academic background is not in policy and procedure; however, just because someone may feel that they don't have the exact background to contribute—that shouldn't stop them from getting involved. We all need to be invested in making this institution what it should be, what it *can* be.

CASBU Corner #1: A Quick Primer on CASBU

by Joe Boivin

Question: “If I’m in CASBU, am I in NUFA?”

Short Answer: Yes, you are!

Long Answer:

I remember that when I first arrived at Nipissing as a Lab Instructor with Biology in 2004, I spent over a year trying to understand how my job fit within the institution during what I now jokingly refer to as my existential crisis. I wasn’t sure if my Department Chair or the Dean was my boss. I was in a full-time position, but I was in the “part-time” bargaining unit. I knew that my salary and working conditions were described in a collective agreement, but at first I didn’t understand how that collective agreement fit within the university’s organizational structure. It was Linda Richards, from Geography, who first sat down with me and explained it all, and her helpfulness came back to me while I read the story about her retirement in the previous issue of *NUFA News*.

Linda’s first description to me of how NUFA is organized hasn’t changed at all since that day. Basically, the Nipissing University Faculty Association (NUFA) is divided into two bargaining units:

1. Full-time Academic Staff Bargaining Unit (FASBU)
2. Contract Academic Staff Bargaining Unit (CASBU)

Individuals in either bargaining unit are Members of NUFA.

So when I realized I was a member of both CASBU and NUFA, I knew who I was and where I belonged. Linda not only ended my existential crisis, but she also made me realize the importance of contributing to the efforts of the faculty association. She encouraged me to volunteer with CASBU’s Collective Bargaining Committee. Ten years and three collective agreements later, CASBU has evolved to include several types of positions. Read through the list to find your job title or the job title of individuals in your Department or School.

1. Part-time Contracts

Types of contracts:

- a) “Course Instructor (On-campus)”
 - aka “per-course” instructors (Undergraduate & Graduate level)
- b) “Course Instructor (Alternative Delivery Mode)”
 - aka “Online instructors”
- c) “Course Instructor (Pre-packaged course...)”
 - aka “Online instructors” (can obviously be confused with above category)
- d) “ABQ Course Instructor”
 - acronym stands for “Additional Basic Qualifications”; part of Faculty of Education

CASBU Corner #1: A Quick Primer on CASBU (continued)

Newly recognized categories of Instructors in the current CASBU CA consist of

- a) "Aboriginal Teacher Certification Instructor"
- b) "Clinical Instructor"
- c) "Course Facilitator"
- d) "Native Classroom Assistant Instructor"
- e) "Native Special Education Assistant Instructor"
- f) "Practical Instructor"
- g) "Teacher of Anishnaabemwin as a Second Language Instructor"

2. Full-time Contracts

Types of Contracts:

- a) Laboratory Instructors
- b) Seminar Instructors
- c) Service Course Instructors



If you find yourself in this list, you are a member of both CASBU and NUFA. CASBU Members have the right to be informed of, and to attend, all meetings of their Academic Unit. So get to know the CASBU Members at the next meeting of your Department or School. Find out with whom you are working to deliver your programs.

If you have any questions about CASBU, please don't hesitate to contact either of the CASBU Members on this year's NUFA Executive: Rhiannon Don, the CASBU Officer (casbuofficer@gmail.com), and me, Joe Boivin, NUFA Member at Large (casbularge@gmail.com).

NUFA Scholarships: The Learning Opportunity Award

by Sarah Winters



The NUFA Scholarships Committee (Adam Adler, Steven Arnocky, Darren Campbell, and Ron Phillips) administers two monetary awards from NUFA for students: the Learning Opportunity Award and the Textbook Bursary. Information on both these awards can be found at the NUFA website. Please advertise both to your students.

In 2014-15, the Scholarships Committee awarded over \$12 000 in Learning Opportunity Awards to students. What follows is an interview with a recipient of some of that money.

Randy Keefer graduated with a BA(Hons) in Political Science in 2015, and is currently taking more courses in order to change his Philosophy minor into a major. He has won three Learning Opportunity Awards for a total of \$1354: two to attend the Model NATO in Ottawa in 2014 and 2015 and one to present on a Digital Humanities panel at Congress with Dr. Marc Plamondon, also in Ottawa, in 2015.

How did you find out about the Learning Opportunity Awards?

I found out about it from one of my Poli Sci professors, Toivo (Koivukoski). He actually makes a big point in telling students “You know there’s money available. Check out the NUFA office.” I didn’t find out about it until my second or third year. There’d always been things I’d wanted to do but I thought “I don’t have the money to do that.” And so he made an announcement to the class and from then on—when the opportunity arose to go Model NATO I thought, “That’s something I can do, because I can apply for the Learning Opportunity Award.”

And how easy or difficult did you find the application process?

Relatively simple. I was blown away by how easy it actually was to apply—much easier than, for example, NUWorks.

Will you be applying again?

I certainly will be. Model NATO is coming up again in February.

I guess this is an obvious question, but how helpful was the money?

Incredibly helpful. It covered some of my transportation costs for Congress in 2015 and for Model NATO it helped cover hotel rooms so that helped me and a lot of other people in the Model NATO group.

Could you have done these things without a Learning Opportunity Award?

I *maybe* could have but it would not have been very easy. I could have stayed in a relative’s house in Ottawa or something like that, but when you’re going with a team for something like Model NATO it’s important to be with your team.

And you applied as a group for funding?

Yes, I applied for Model NATO as a group and for the Society for Digital Humanities at Congress as an individual.

NUFA Scholarships: The Learning Opportunity Award (Continued)

Do you think students know enough about this award?

Absolutely not. Just a couple of weeks ago I met someone who wanted to do the Conflict Resolution Workshop and they really wanted to be involved but just couldn't figure out how to do it, so I said "Check out NUFA."

And what in your opinion would be the best way for NUFA to let more students know about this?

Good question. I think student word-of-mouth is actually one of the big things. Not to take anything away from professors because obviously students listen to professors, but I think students can, um "tune out" a little bit sometimes and when you've got another student saying "Hey you can do some of the things you really want to do—check out this Learning Opportunity Award . . ."

So in other words, NUFA *couldn't* do more?

That's what I think.

How has winning this award made you feel about NUFA?

I like NUFA! The award itself is a fantastic opportunity—overall I don't think students know enough about NUFA and then in turn don't know enough about the award. NUFA is an important part of the university.

One last question: did you ever apply for the Textbook Bursary?

No.

Do you know what that is?

No, I don't.

In the next issue of *NUFA News* there will be an interview with a winner of the Textbook Bursary.





Spotlight on Research: Dr. Natalya Brown (APS)

Natalya Brown's research is interdisciplinary, blending economic analysis with political science, education, tourism, housing, and, most recently, music in a cross-fertilization of research, teaching, and service.

In a continuation of work from her dissertation, she examines candidacy and voting using game theory analysis. Specifically, she investigates the effect that alienation and voters' uncertainty about their own preferred policies can have on voter turnout and the positioning of candidates in a two-candidate election, as well as the effect of term limits on the characteristics of individuals seeking office.

Much of her research is collaborative. With Kristen Ferguson and Linda Piper she has studied common reading programs in terms of their impact on sense of community and on pedagogy, and has examined the book selection process that is key to the success of these programs.

Since 2011, she has been working with Linda Piper on qualitative and quantitative research on eco-tourism operators in Jamaica with the goal of capturing their eco-tourism philosophy and practices, and identifying similarities and differences in objectives and offerings.

She also works on the issue of immigrant housing in North Bay, a research project she was asked to undertake when volunteering at the North Bay and District Multicultural Centre.

Her most recent collaboration is with Adam Adler with whom she recently presented two papers at the *Symposium on Singing and Song* in St. John's, Newfoundland. This is a new and exciting area of inquiry for her as it allows her to apply economic analysis to the context of a university community choir, specifically North Bay's own University-Community Choir Near North Voices of which Adam is the artistic director.

Underlying all these different areas of research is the inquiry into the idea of service and how it is valued. If people "tend to only value things that they can measure," how then can the time and effort necessary to human lives lived in human communities be "monetized"? This same question is relevant to her work with NUFA including the Collective Bargaining Committee where she works on costing NUFA's proposals. The interdisciplinary nature of her research is also reflected in and informed by the interdisciplinary nature of NUFA itself.



The Quizmaster Challenge

After many requests from Members to include a *Cosmo*-style quiz in the *NUFA News*, we have finally capitulated. Quizmasters Sarah Winters and Wendy Peters help you to better know your union, community, and labour-related culture, as well as some facts regarding historical context:

1. What date does *The Oxford English Dictionary* give as the first appearance of the meaning of union as "An organized association of the workers in a trade, group of trades, or profession, formed to protect and further their rights and interests, and (sometimes) to provide financial assistance during strikes, sickness, unemployment, etc"?

- a. 1609 b. 1777 c. 1801 d. 1818

2. Of which union was Jimmy Hoffa the president?

- a. Teamsters b. National Union of Teachers c. United Steelworkers d. United Auto Workers

3. Who said, "The most important of all [private societies] are workingmen's unions, for these virtually include all the rest ... it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient"?

- a. Karl Marx b. Tommy Douglas c. Pope Leo XII d. Rosa Luxemburg

4. Which singer-songwriter recorded a version of the song "Which side are you on?" to support the British Miners' Strike of 1984-5?

- a. Bob Dylan b. Paul Simon c. Billy Bragg d. Carly Simon

5. When Claudius in *Hamlet* mentions a "union," what does he mean?

- a. his marriage b. a political alliance c. a pearl d. a song

6. Which movie starring Sally Field tells the story of a union organizer at a textiles factory?

- a. *Norma Rae* b. *Places in the Heart* c. *Steel Magnolias* d. *Forrest Gump*

7. Which of the following novels has labour unrest as part of its subject matter?

- a. *Ulysses* by James Joyce b. *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell
c. *Emma* by Jane Austen d. *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe

8. Solidarity is the English name of a famous union that belonged to which country?

- a. France b. Ireland c. Mexico d. Poland

9. Where is the NUFA office located?

- a. B211 b. H171 c. A244 d. F301

10. Fill in the blank from the most recent FASBU Collective Agreement: "All Members of the Bargaining Unit will be entitled to a basic annual vacation leave of _ working days."

- a. 12 b. 15 c. 20 d. 22

The Quizmaster Challenge (Continued)

11. Which of the following is not a NUFA Committee?

- a. Collective Bargaining b. Archives c. Communications d. Social

12. Most universities in Canada have unionized faculty, but some do not. Which of the following university faculty and faculty associations are not unionized:

- a. McGill b. Waterloo c. McMaster d. all of the above

13. How many unions are there at Nipissing University? Can you name them all?

14. During the 2009 round of collective bargaining between NUFA and Nipissing U the tentative deal was brokered just hours before NUFA's strike deadline of November 8, 2009. True or false?

15. What is the name of the organization that represents, supports and advocates on behalf of twenty-eight faculty associations in Ontario?

16. Which present or former NUFA President is set to become President of OCUFA?

17. Which present or former NUFA president used to be a cheerleader? Hint: This person also had lunch with William Shatner in the CN Tower.

18. Which present or former NUFA president was in a band that recorded an album produced by Alex Lifeson from Rush?

19. Which present or former NUFA president dislikes flying yet spent past birthdays gamboling (not gambling) in Spain, Latvia, Germany, Bulgaria, and Las Vegas just to name a few locations?

20. Which present or former NUFA president grew up in an "intentional community" of hippie Quakers?

21. Which present or former NUFA president's father was a union buster who worked for a major grocery chain?



News Items

Workplace Stress Survey

Are you stressed at work and want someone to know about it? OCUFA and CAUT are running a survey on workplace stress this October and November to gather information that Faculty Associations can use to help negotiate for their members in relation to health, safety, workload, and harassment. NUFA encourages all its members to fill out the survey at:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OCUFA_Stress_Survey



The Quizmaster Challenge Answers

1. d 2. a 3. c 4. c 5. c 6. a 7. b 8. d 9. c 10. d 11. b 12. d
13. Three: Nipissing University Student Union representing students of Nipissing University; OPSEU Local 608 representing office, clerical and technical employees of the University; Nipissing University Faculty Association representing full- and part-time academic faculty
14. True 15. Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA)
16. Gyllie Phillips 17. Susan Srigley 18. Rob Breton 19. Todd Horton
20. Gyllie Phillips 21. Susan Srigley

You're Invited: All NUFA members are cordially invited to contribute stories, news items, notices, letters to the editors, opinion pieces, reviews, and photographs to *The NUFA News*. The subject matter or focal point of these submissions should relate to our union and its membership.

Contributions can be sent to: danj@nipissingu.ca