

# THE NUFA NEWS

Fall Term 2023, Issue #40

Cairns/Kruk/Murton/Neal

## CONTENTS

**FASBU Collective Agreement Ratified/I**

**The President's Report/I**

**Beneath winter's veil, there is a pulse of reflection/2**

**An Interview with Professor Larry Patriquin/3**

**NUFA by the Numbers/5**

**NUSU Talks/6**

**In Celebration of Professor A.W. (Bill) Plumstead (1933-2023)/7**

**NUFA at Labour Day 2023/8**



## FASBU Collective Agreement Ratified

A new Collective Agreement between Nipissing University and the Full-Time Academic Staff Bargaining Unit (FASBU) was ratified by both parties, as announced in a joint statement by NUFA President Natalya Brown and PVPA Dr. Ann-Barbara Graff on November 21.

This is a four-year deal that runs until 2027. Members ratified the deal with 89% voting in favour. One hundred thirty-five of 160 members voted, making the voter turnout 84%.

Thank you to all those who voted, and a big thanks to Jane Barker and the other members of the Collective Bargaining Committee for their work in making this happen.

## The President's Report

*Natalya Brown, Associate Professor of Economics and Business and President of NUFA*

More than two years since Laurentian University became the first publicly-funded university in Canada to file for protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA), to the surprise of its faculty association, ten months from the expiration of the retirement incentive package, three months from returning from a six-month sabbatical, one month from the announcement that Brescia would be merging with Western to the surprise of their faculty associations, and two weeks from Fair Employment Week, I have been asked to reflect on "respect" and "renewal". It may be hard to capture everything that respect and renewal mean for us, but it's easy to recognize when they are absent.

From what we have seen on our own campus and across the sector, shared governance and academic freedom are under threat, yet they are at the heart

of any discussion about respect for academic staff. The events at Laurentian and Brescia illustrate that seismic decisions that affect the university could happen without our input and be presented to us as a *fait accompli*, and this should keep us ever vigilant. It also means that we should be ready and willing to do our share when difficult decisions must be made. The recent increase in harassment and threats experienced by academic staff speaking out about international events threatens our academic freedom. Respect means having the space and safety to disagree but doing so considerately.

When it comes to academic matters, our voices need to be heard, and not just some of our voices. Respect means recognizing the contributions of contract academic staff and matching that with improved visibility, compensation, and job security. Respect means being in the room where decisions that affect our working conditions are made. Respect means having those that evaluate our work recognize and demonstrate genuine interest in our contributions, accomplishments, and sacrifices. Respect means having colleagues see value in your work and efforts, providing mentorship, encouragement, and support. Finally, respect can be seen in the smaller things that affect our working lives, such as not leaving the technology in the classroom in such a state that the next instructor has to call UTS in tears. Respect – it's what we all want.

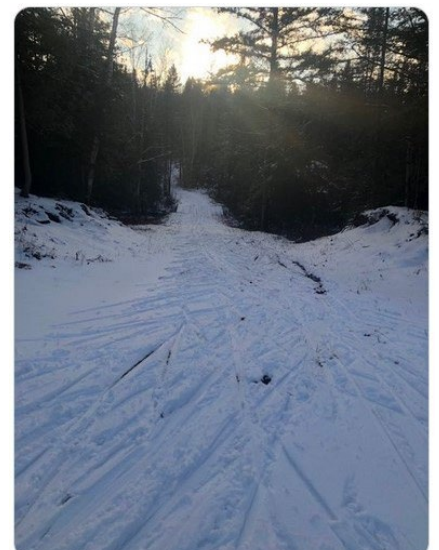
The conversations that I have with colleagues about renewal tend to focus on new hires bringing their energy and ideas to our schools, departments, and programs, and concerns about replacing our retired/retiring colleagues. Those conversations typically end with frustration with us either lamenting the end of another hiring cycle without adding to our ranks or trying to ignore the side-eye from our colleagues because we won the new hire lottery. While important to the life of our university, renewal is so much more than new hires and new positions. My six-month sabbatical (that I wish was a full-year, but that is a story for another day) afforded me the opportunity to re-energize my research agenda, including dusting off some long-neglected manuscripts, developing a new area of interest, and making connections with new colleagues. I recognize the opportunity for personal renewal that comes from a sabbatical is a privilege many of our members do not possess. The chance for renewal emphasizes the importance of teaching, curriculum, and research supports. It's why we have pushed to expand access to professional development opportunities in bargaining. None of us deserve to feel stuck. We all need time to recharge and reflect. Renewal – it's what we all need.

## **Beneath winter's veil, there is a pulse of renewal**

*Steven Cairns, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing*

As the winter season approaches, it carries with it a deep sense of renewal. As nature sheds its old leaves and prepares for a period of hibernation, so too do we, as faculty, find ourselves in a time of introspection and contemplation of the year past and the year ahead. Coming to the end of a collective bargaining period also invites an opportunity within this season's ethos to reflect on the theme of renewal of our individual and collective experiences in the university community.

When we think of renewal, what does it imply? Does refreshed or revived thinking come to mind? Or perhaps leaving something behind or recovering something that was forgotten? Renewal can also reflect the carrying on of what has been, renewal as continuity to an organization's *raison d'être*, the



We leave tracks behind us. The trail has its effects on the skiers, and the skiers have their effects on it.  
- Toivo Koivukoski

fundamental reason we are here as a university in the near north.

These reflection starters on renewal come from conversations I have had with faculty members who took some time with me to delve into its meaning and alliterations of respect, relationships, and reconciliation as expressed throughout this newsletter. And so, when pressed, faculty reflected on renewal as including both the birth of novel ideas and the rejuvenation of what has always existed.

Key moments in my conversations expressed the essence of renewal as something that requires bringing forth the need for open dialogue. As faculty members, the fear of voicing our concerns, or the apprehension that our ideas might be 'policed' or that we're subconsciously policing ourselves, can be stifling. Unfortunately, we are often reacting to and moving from a position of fear concerning the administration or other larger structures that govern us. Fear distracts us from our mission as a university and in that struggle within adversarial positions we lose focus on what matters. Plain speaking, honesty, and transparency should be pillars of preserving an intellectual life among faculty and relevant to reflections on renewal. How do we foster an environment where everyone feels safe to speak out, challenge norms, and contribute to the innovation and evolution of our university community without fear of losing our identity or purpose as a university? Faculty renewal involves imparting to students the essence of being part of a university and upholding its unique values, transcending merely preparing them for job opportunities.

We navigate our purpose in the context of calls for innovation and broader societal challenges, locally and globally. We exist in a privileged social sphere, which stands in stark contrast to the realities of many people experiencing poverty and a housing crisis. The spirit of the winter season presents an opportunity for deep reflection on our roles, responsibilities, and relationships within the broader university community. We as faculty represent core values of knowledge generation which are aspirational for social transformation, not prescriptive ideas, or points on a compass. Renewal like a pulse can move proactively through our community in ways that foster academic inquiry in harmony with innovation without losing what it means to be a university.

## Most of Our History Is Walking Out the Door: An Interview with Professor Larry Patriquin

Laurie Kruk, *Professor, English Studies*

**LK:** I am here at gd2go with Professor Larry Patriquin—surprise, not Twiggs! So we're here to talk about your retirement—how long you've worked at Nipissing—to set the record straight. And then, what you consider to be your biggest contribution.

**LP:** I started in 1998 and retired in 2023, so it's been twenty-five years. I have three contributions to point to: one is being Chief Negotiator for NUFA for the bargaining rounds in 2006 and 2009. We did a lot of work there, moved to a "3+2" course load, and got the tenure and promotion procedures (substantially rewritten) into the collective agreement. I was Chair of our small Social Welfare and Social Development department for seven years, helping to establish the 4-year program. And I also developed the collaborative degree-diploma program with Canadore, where students can get a four-year B.A. in Social Welfare and Social Development and a two-year Social Service Worker diploma, all in four years. Students do two years with us, then a year at Canadore, then back with us for their final year.

**LK:** Is that program still in existence?



Larry Patriquin.  
Photo by Polar  
Studios.



**LP:** It is, yes. We don't have a lot of students in it, but the ones who go through it give it high praise; it's very valuable for them. They get real world experience, including a 350-hour placement at Canadore.

**LK:** To unpack those three contributions a bit ... you've been a big contributor to NUFA and that was all before our strike in 2015. It's good to reflect on that now; one of my (newer) colleagues said he almost felt like he had "strike envy"! Because he felt it was good for us. Any comments on that?

**LP:** The strike certainly unified us; you got to meet a lot of people. But it's ironic in a way, we didn't know at the time, but that was the beginning of the end. After that, we had some very poor senior leadership at the university, and we started on a downhill trajectory. We lost community, the place looked like it was going bankrupt, so those were very unpleasant years, after the strike.

**LK:** Can you please explain the difference between Social Welfare and Social Work?

**LP:** Social Welfare and Social Development is a Bachelor of Arts degree and Social Work is a BSW, in which you do two years of Liberal Arts, and two years of Social Work, including practicums. So in Social Work you're really aiming for a particular career, but in Social Welfare and Social Development we've had a lot of students go on to graduate school in interdisciplinary programs like Social Justice.

**LK:** Is Social Welfare and Social Development a unique Nipissing program, then?

**LP:** It's unique in Canada, actually. There are lots of similar programs in the UK, but for whatever reason, programs in Social Policy don't seem to have caught on in North America.

**LK:** Interesting. We are distinctive here, and we should hang onto our distinctiveness!

**LP:** And support it. The program just went through an external review. The referees were here recently, so hopefully I'll be able to see that report. It'll be two years in December since we completed our Self-Study!

**LK:** That's why it's very important to talk today, and to keep the history....

**LP:** Yes, and we're going to lose a lot of that history at the end of this year, when at least fifteen or sixteen faculty retire, those who took the retirement incentive package\*. Most of the history of Nipissing University is walking out the door, after next year. This is a chance for the university to rebuild, but at the same time, there's going to be a lot of pressure on new faculty, as far as service goes.

**LK:** Yes. My next question is, "What will you miss?" Note, *not* "what will you *not* miss"!

**LP [laughs]:** My honest answer to that is: I will miss nothing. As I suggested, the first fifteen years of my career, I would have missed a lot. It was a great place to work, we had lots of community, decent administrators. It seemed like we were working together toward the same goals. In the last ten years of my career, I would generally say it was an awful work environment, with incompetent administration, heading toward bankruptcy. For me, it was becoming a toxic workplace. The COVID pandemic didn't help, but Nipissing was falling apart long before that. So I officially retired, but I really quit.

**LK:** Since you are so clearly *done*, Larry, what are your retirement plans?

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\* Author's note: according to the NUFA office, 12 members took the early retirement package.

**LP:** I just finished a book manuscript on democracy and social rights, and have contacted a publisher. I'm also co-writing a book on the history of Social Welfare in Canada, with colleagues. My three chapters are pretty much done. And I'm now on Twitter (@larryreadsbooks)! I'm surprised by how interesting it is; I'm following some really informative people. And I think I've got *one* more book in me.

**LK:** Still learning! Now, do you have roots in the near North?

**LP:** No, I'm planning to move to Nova Scotia in a couple of years. I have four brothers out there, nephews, a niece, now some grandnephews and a grandniece. I'm on a waiting list for an apartment building that is being constructed, so we'll see how that turns out. Of course it's very hard to plan your retirement, when you're not in a *real* pension. Still, I want to see the ocean again.

## NUFA by the Numbers

Rhiannon Don, *Executive Officer, NUFA*

Both the CASBU and FASBU Collective Agreements require the university to share certain kinds of information about the membership with NUFA. We make use of this information as part of bargaining, but we also thought it would be interesting for the membership to see what some of the data tells us. I don't think that there's anything here that's too surprising, but seeing the actual figures is pretty stark.

First, we get very different data for each bargaining unit. The FASBU information tells us about age, gender, faculty, date of hire (mostly incorrect), workload, last sabbatical, rank, year of promotion to current rank, length of contract, leaves, actual vs. nominal salary, and the amount of dues paid, among other things. For CASBU, we get the name, faculty and department, and amount of dues paid, but we also get copies of each individual contract, which lets us put together a better look at the CASBU demographics.

On the FASBU side of things, we currently have 160 members, including the 12 folks on the retirement incentive package who will retire in 2024. There are currently 14 folks on sabbatical. There are 2 librarians, 11 full-time instructors, 8 limited-term appointments, 13 folks on the tenure-track, and 126 people with tenure. There are 26 people at the rank of Assistant, 58 at Associate, and 63 Full Professors. There are 90 members in Arts & Science and 68 in Education & Professional Schools.

In terms of age, our oldest members were born in the 1940s, and our youngest members were born in the 1990s. Of FASBU members, 66% (106/160) are above the age of 50.

In 2022-2023, CASBU members taught approximately 42.8% of the courses offered at Nipissing. In Fall 2023, we currently have 225 CASBU members. Forty-nine of them are teaching Alternative Delivery courses, 38 are Clinical Instructors in Nursing, 21 are Practical Instructors in the Bachelor of Physical Health and Education, 49 are teaching Prepackaged courses, 7 are teaching labs part-time, 2 are teaching in the Indigenous Classroom Assistant Program, and 109 are teaching on campus here in North Bay. Of these folks, 143 are teaching more than one course this year, and 22 of them are teaching courses in more than one delivery mode.

There are 35 CASBU members in Arts & Science, 189 in Education & Professional Schools, and 1 person who teaches courses in both. The highest concentration of CASBU members is in Nursing (all programs) with 76 CASBU folks and Education (B.Ed. and BPHE) with 88.

Having access to this information helps to guide decision making for the NUFA executive. If a little

more than half of our CASBU members are teaching courses either online or away from the main campus, we need to think about what membership engagement and bargaining could look like with those folks, since some of our usual methods for building solidarity, like socials, won't be as effective. Similarly, if we know that nearly 2/3s of our FASBU members will likely retire in the next 15-20 years, how can we help shape what retirement options they have available to them, and how can we help to ensure renewal for departments and schools? And if we know that EPS is being disproportionately staffed by people on short-term contracts, how can we advocate for better jobs for those people?

## NUSU Talks

Em Cooke, *VP Finance & Administration* and Harikesh Panchal, *VP Advocacy and Awareness*,  
Nipissing University Student Union (NUSU)

*Editor's Note: This is the first of what we hope will be a regular column, creating a space for the faculty union and the student union to talk to each other.*

### Food Bank

NUSU provides an emergency food bank for Nipissing students to access in times of need. In the past two years, we have seen increasing demand at a pace that has brought concerns about the sustainability of the food bank. Since 2019, usage has increased by 723.8%. This led us to consider different initiatives to improve sustainability for the future operations of the food bank.

Operationally, we have changed the amount from 2 bags per student per week to 1 bag per student per week. This change allowed more students to receive food as when there was a two-bag allotment, most students were not able to get anything. We also focused our shopping on the most essential, necessary and desired food items.

We have also kicked up our fundraising efforts this year. Our Director of Communications, Sarah McGowan, and our Graphic Designer, Madison Turner, produced a colouring book that features Nipissing and North Bay landmarks. This is sold at the NUSU student centre for \$10. We also partnered with Sew Sweet Snuggles to sell NUSU stuffed animals. They are \$25 for an 8" and \$35 for a 16". All proceeds from these initiatives go back into the food bank.

Additionally, donations from both faculty and administration have been at an all-time high. NUFA's matching campaign has increased faculty donations which are already extremely regular. We also receive physical donations from many faculty and staff which are extremely valuable as they provide variety for students and allow us to provide more outside of our weekly grocery shops.

We were featured in a documentary being filmed by Theia Productions regarding food insecurity in Northern Ontario. We also have had multiple Social Work placement students doing extremely valuable work surrounding our food bank and sustainability.

### Day-to-Day at NUSU

This year we have a very uncommon advantage over many other years at NUSU: 3 out of 4 of our executives are returning for their second year in office, with the 4th member of NUSU executive having experience as a NUSU director and staff member. This knowledge allowed us to hit the ground running in May to achieve as much as we can in our one-year term. With the support of our fabulous staff, we have made many great achievements since the beginning of our terms. We are striving to make institutional changes that will better NUSU for years to come.



The NUSU Executive has the privilege of sitting on various bodies such as Academic Senate and NU Board of Governors as well as their committees. There have been many occasions where we have physically stood up and used our voices to share with decision-making bodies how students feel about certain matters. Although our advocacy initiatives are very widespread, here are a few examples of what we have been focusing on: the housing crisis and how all students are affected; the challenges faced by International students at Nipissing; departmental mergers; and how students felt about these among many other controversial matters. We will continue to amplify student voices in Senate and BoG.

We will continue to develop and improve NUSU's relationships with different departments and groups at the university. We are extremely grateful for the working relationship with these departments, including our wonderful faculty association.

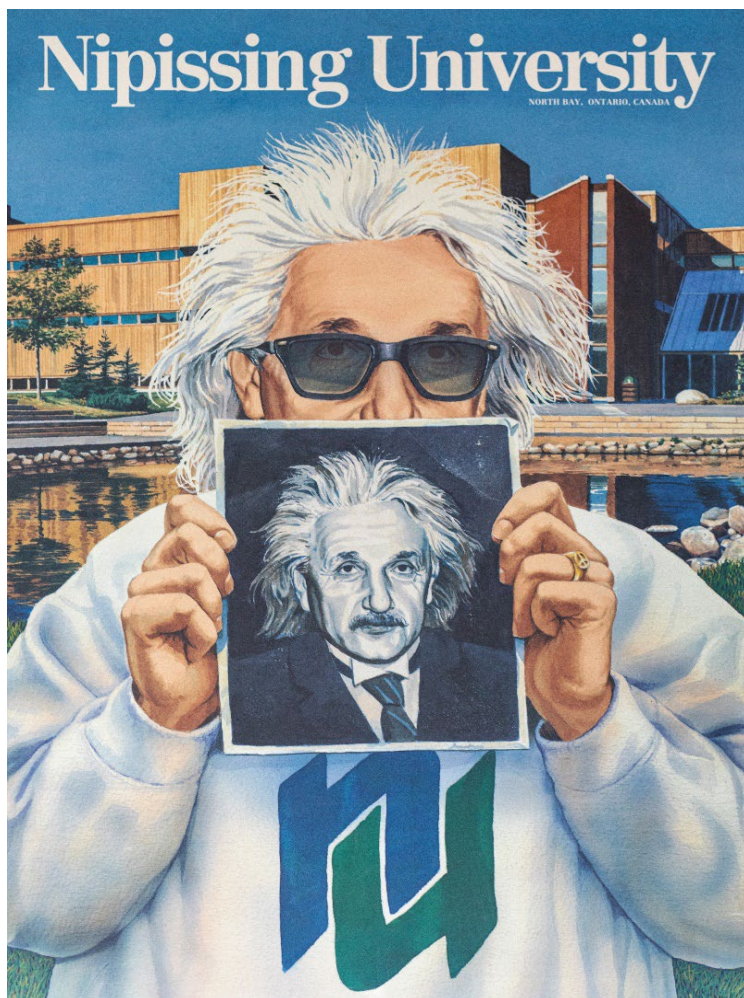
## **In Celebration of Professor A.W. (Bill) Plumstead (1933-2023)**

*Laurie Kruk, Professor, English Studies*

I first met Bill Plumstead in 1994, when I was a newbie Assistant Professor...and he was looking towards retirement. An American Literature scholar, specializing in Melville and Hawthorne, plus a creative writer, Bill also became our “utility infielder” as a part-time instructor. He taught spring/summer and also at the (former) Bracebridge satellite campus. In fact, Bill was the driving force behind establishing a union for the part-time and contract faculty at Nipissing, which became CASBU as we know it today. Bill also got this new Canadianist involved in a variety of projects, including organizing three multi-disciplinary conferences, “Visions of the North, Voices of the North,” with the late Professor Tony Blackburn, a geographer and past President of Nipissing University (1983-1990).

Always open to trying something new, Bill was involved in our experiment in first-year pedagogy, the collaborative Introduction to English Studies (ENGL 1105), taught by the whole department, in large lectures and seminars. This ran for almost a decade, and was a true teaching laboratory, especially for new instructors, and was remembered fondly by Grad Paul Courville as “an amazing teaching and learning experience.”

Professor Gyllian Phillips recalls, “when I arrived to work in the English Department



*The New U.*

Was Bill Plumstead the model for Einstein, on this 1992 poster celebrating the granting of a university charter to Nipissing?

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in Fall 1998, we had a departmental retreat, and Bill and Nikki hosted it on their island in Temagami! It was a powerful experience to spend a day working on our plans as a department, and our co-teaching of English 1105, in this beautiful place. It felt very “northern” and I sensed that my work in English at Nipissing would be more than just a job.”

Colleague Rod Carley recalls how he “met Bill at my first Nip U English Department meeting in 1999. Like me, Bill was teaching part-time, American Literature his ticket. How fitting, I thought, since Bill bore a striking resemblance to Mark Twain (if he were tossed in a blender with Albert Einstein). Over the ensuing years, Bill and his beloved Nikki were loyal subscribers to the Nipissing Stage Company and staunch supporters of all my theatre work... Bill was a tenacious dreamer who kick-started the film industry in North Bay when he produced the independent feature film *That Beautiful Somewhere* in 2005 based on his novel *Loon* (1992). Bill and I worked together on a few projects — our longest partnership began in 2012 when we co-wrote a screenplay based on the infamous Donald Kelly manhunt in 1975. Many rewrites and funding applications later, a very different screenplay finally went before the camera as a small independent feature film shot in Edmonton in 2022. I had left the project a few years earlier, but I was glad for Bill that he got to see it happen. Over the course of the six years we worked together on the screenplay, we became good friends and shared many a big-hearted and winding conversation over a rum. Bill shot for the moon with all his creative projects. He was passionate in his belief in developing the film industry in Northern Ontario. It consumed him and I marvelled at his octogenarian energy. He was a risk-taker and carved out a life on his terms. I’m fortunate that our paths crossed when they did.” Bill retired from part-time teaching in 2008.

Finally, it should be known that Bill was such a popular figure on campus, that it was rumoured that he was the “model” for the “Einstein” marketing poster (see illustration).

## NUFA at Labour Day 2023



Past President Sarah Winters, NUSU President Riley McEntee, Lanyan Chen, and Peter Forster.





Intrepid NUFA News reporter Laurie Kruk, NUFA President Natalya Brown, Sarah Winters, and Lanyan Chen.

# NUFA

Nipissing University Faculty Association