

THE NUFA NEWS

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The President's Report

Sarah Winters, Associate Professor of English and President of NUFA

As I write this, I am preparing for the General Membership Meeting on November 1, at which I will give the Land Acknowledgement in Nishaabemwin made for NUFA by Falcon McLeod, Member of CASBU and teacher of the Anishnaabemowin courses (note the dialect spelling variations) here at the university. As far as I know, NUFA is the only Faculty Association in Canada, certainly in Ontario, to have a Land Acknowledgement in the language of the land, and I think we should be proud of this.

I prepared myself for the work of speaking the language by taking Anishnaabemowin I last spring session when it was taught by Danette Restoule. Gyllie Phillips joined me as a student (and Gyllie also took Anishnaabemowin II). While we tried to audit the course, it turns out you can't audit language courses, so we used our tuition exemptions as FASBU members to enrol as "special students."

This was an instance of NUFA Members being served by the Mission Statement of the University: "Nipissing University will encourage students, faculty and staff to realize their full intellectual and personal potential to the benefit of our local, national, and international communities." What troubles me is that while faculty in FASBU and staff in OPSEU have the opportunity to take courses with a tuition exemption, as do their spouses and dependents, faculty in CASBU do not. CASBU faculty are the only group of employees who are not, in fact, encouraged in this way to realize their full intellectual and personal potential to the benefit of our local, national, and international communities.

This is an inequity, one of many, that has fired me up for CASBU bargaining in the past few months, one that the CASBU CBC has been trying to address at the table. I hope those of you in FASBU will respond to forthcoming invitations to show support and solidarity for your CASBU colleagues as the team moves into conciliation and whatever lies beyond.

New Faculty Profile

Colin McCarter, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and the Department of Biology & Chemistry

I am really excited to be at Nipissing University, jointly appointed to the Department of Geography and the Department of Biology & Chemistry. I grew up in Oakville, Ontario and spent many summers wandering/canoeing Algonquin Park and the areas around Georgian Bay. In 2005 I started as an undergraduate student in geography at the University of Waterloo and ended up spending the next 12 years there as a student (undergraduate, MSc, and PhD) and as a newly-minted postdoc. During my time in Waterloo, I became very interested in combining ecohydrology and ecological restoration and spent many summers in eastern Quebec studying and restoring peatlands. For my PhD, I travelled back to northern Ontario, this time ~500 km north of Timmins, where I built an off-grid water pumping system that mimicked the hydrological and chemical load of a wastewater treatment plant effluent to understand how mine camp wastewater impacts the hydrology and biogeochemistry of sub-arctic peatlands. It was within this work that I got interested in mercury. This interest in mercury led me to the University of Toronto Scarborough where I focused on how atmospheric sulphate deposition and forestry impacts mercury transport and bioavailability. My final postdoc was as a McCall MacBain Postdoctoral Fellow at McMaster University, where I jumped back into peatlands, looking at the interaction of peatland fires and heavy metal mobility with colleagues from Canada, Britain, Austria, and Indonesia.

My current Canada Research Chair explores how climate and environmental change is impacting northern water quality, with a focus on mercury. Specifically, I look at how the interactions and feedbacks between ecohydrological, biogeochemical, and soil physical processes control the movement of water, nutrients, carbon, and contaminants in northern landscapes under increasing climate and land use pressures. Using this knowledge, I have gone back to my academic roots, so to speak, and am developing novel restoration techniques to accelerate peatland restoration and design new methods to restore heavily contaminated peatlands around Sudbury.

On Armenia: An Interview with Anahit Armenakyan

At the October 14th Senate, Anahit Armenakyan, Associate Professor in the School of Business, asked why the University was quick to respond to the situation in Ukraine, but slow to do so regarding Iran, and said nothing about atrocities in Armenia. Sarah Winters was at that Senate and asked Anahit for an interview for The NUFA News to follow up on that question.

Tell me about your life in Armenia and how you came to live in North America.

I was born and grew up in Kajaran, a little mining town in Armenia -- actually rather similar to North Bay in many ways -- in a family of educators. Kajaran is part of a territory called Syunik, which means 'column'. People of Syunik fought both the Turks and the Bolsheviks in the 1920s and this part was eventually made part of the USSR along with the rest of Armenia. Because of its strategic and economic value to the Soviet Union, many skilled workers from other republics of the USSR lived in Kajaran, which was consequently a very multi-ethnic and multi-national place in a rather mono-ethnic country.

My first language was Russian. My mother taught Russian, and it was the language of career development in Soviet times. It didn't occur to me until I came to Canada that it was a language of colonization. I didn't learn to speak, read, or write classic literary Armenian until I was about 13. While I grew up with a lot of freedoms, I was at the same time, apparently, a subject of colonial power and colonial policy.

My first degree in the early 1990s, in programming and IT, coincided with the first Nagorno-Karabakh war from 1988 to 1994. Because of fears of attack on our nuclear power plant, it was shut down, and the whole nation spent years in full blockade with cold winters without power and not enough food. In 1995 I graduated from the State Engineering University of Armenia (SEUA) and in 1996 I obtained my first university lecturing position in the Kapan branch of the SEUA. In 2000, I switched to an MBA at the

American University of Armenia and got a scholarship for a second MBA at the University of Pittsburgh. With the support not just of close family but the whole kinship who chipped in a bit of money, I was able to go. I arrived in the USA with \$100 in pocket money. That was my first major trip overseas.

Tell me about the current situation in Armenia.

The war that started on September 27, 2020 is not new, but a centuries-long conflict. The area concerned is Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh, as we Armenians call it. This territory was given to Soviet Azerbaijan by the Soviets in the 1920s when Armenia was a young democracy (established in 1918), but the Armenians there always wanted to leave the Soviet Union and become part of Armenia. Armenians in another area given to Azerbaijan, Nakhichevan, became the victims of ethnic cleansing, and there are no Armenians living there anymore. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh resisted, having the vivid example of the people of Nakhichevan. The first Nagorno-Karabakh War lasted from 1988 to 1994 and ended with a ceasefire agreement—unfortunately not a peace agreement. Although I always knew in the back of my mind that the war was not over, I did not expect the war to start again and be so bad and so ridiculously cruel. The 2020 war was fought by the Azerbaijan army, supported by Turkish military, strategists, and mercenaries, and arms from Israel. We were alone and we resisted for 44 days.

I was not aware of this conflict and I wonder if the Canadian media does not report on it to the same extent as it reports on Ukraine and Iran, and if that is true, why doesn't it?

My assumption is that it doesn't fit the narrative. The Canadian news industry has connections with the British news industry, and Britain has always been invested in the Azerbaijani economy, and was always a close ally of Turkey. Also, Canada provided high precision targeting equipment to Turkey in 2020 for use with drones that killed civilians.¹ The Armenian diaspora in Canada made efforts to get the Canadian media to start covering that development, and when it was covered, and evidence was provided, the sales were halted. Armenia is a tiny country and Canadians do not have much investment in our relationship with Armenia—no embassy for example, and although [MP and Minister of Foreign Affairs] Melanie Joly announced in the summer of 2022 that one would be opening, in her original tweet she said this would be done to anger Russia, which was a terrible thing to do to Armenians.

There is an irony here because Canada's first international humanitarian project, in the 1920s, was to bring in refugee boys (and later girls) who'd been orphaned in the Armenian Genocide. This was known as Canada's Noble Experiment, and the boys became known as the Georgetown Boys.²

Are you the only Armenian at Nipissing University?

That I know of.

And what about North Bay?

Murat Tuncali told me that, before me, there was a family of doctors but, apparently, they left before I came. I was contacted in 2015 by a person who claimed to be Armenian, probably because that year was the commemoration of the Armenian genocide of 1915. He went through the university website for some other reason, and he saw my family name which is as Armenian as it could be—and my first name, Anahit, is a typically Zoroastrian goddess name—very Armenian (very Iranian too). He contacted me to say 'let's mourn together' but we never met and I never heard from him again so I don't know—I guess I'm the only one.

So is it lonely for you?

I wasn't lonely before because I'm a relatively extroverted person, and because technology allows me to talk to my family every day. But, if something goes wrong back home it takes me at least 35 hours to get there—I'm sure you know what that feels like being a New Zealander yourself—but I wouldn't

¹ <https://ricochet.media/en/3388/feds-wont-say-how-canadian-drone-tech-wound-up-in-azerbaijan-armenia-war>

² <https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/plaques/the-armenian-boys-farm-home-georgetown>)

say that I felt lonely until September 27, 2020. That's when I felt ridiculously lonely because in that first week there were only three people who reached out to me and asked how I was doing, and I was going crazy. That was the time I truly understood how loud silence can be. When I emailed the university community to ask them to sign that petition that I was bringing to the House of Commons, that was a signal for many people to reply and say "We didn't know how to approach you. Thank you for doing this." That brought me some comfort. Since then I re-prioritized many different things in my life.

What could NUFA and/or Nipissing University do to support you or others in similar situations?

The sad truth is that I don't really know what NUFA can do, but I do appreciate the writing of Amnesty International letters—a little dent is still a dent. I would like to see some sort of protocol developed to, at least, acknowledge events happening in countries where our faculty (and staff, and students) come from. To me it was sad to see nothing about Iran earlier—and we have great Iranian professors not to mention a growing number of graduate students from Iran. There are other countries too, such as India, but the ones I have seen acknowledged and noticed are Myanmar, Taiwan, and Ukraine—because they all seem to fit the Canadian political narrative.

I wouldn't like to see the university take the position that "we can't acknowledge every single instance of suffering that is happening so let us acknowledge none." I don't think that's a human way to do it. I think our university is becoming—coming from a business professor this may sound ridiculous—a dehumanized business entity that doesn't care about human beings. As a business professor, I do believe that, to be sustainable and successful, any business, let alone an educational institution, must acknowledge and value the most important asset that is out there – people! That is why I do not think that the current quasi-lean-management approach is sustainable. If we are the university that cares for one person at a time then I think we have to show that kind of support, one person at a time.

Dave Hackett: "Anything is Possible"

Interviewed by Laurie Kruk

LK: I am interviewing Dave Hackett on the occasion of his retirement after 34 years. He joined Nipissing in 1987 (before our charter) in the Department of Environmental Geography; with his help, it has grown into the Department of Biology and Chemistry.

LK: What do you feel was your most important contribution to NU over your career?

DH: Two words: starting things. One of the first things was the Research Office, to help people get money! And then we had a chance to do the St. Lucia exchange. We had a chance to get the Alcan Research Preserve on Lake Talon. Field camps. The Ontario Wetland Evaluation System classes. So one thing led to another...but always short start-ups were my biggest thrill.

LK: Because that's where the excitement is!

DH: And we're in the right place for starting things, because a small new university needs a lot of stuff. And I found it really hard to get research money ... even after we got the Research Office, and we got NSERC funding approval. So, I started writing textbooks. And teaching lots, often on overload. But writing books didn't take a lot of money. Books like *The Naked Ape*, or *The Selfish Gene* are high calibre books in lay language that influenced the field. And you can MAKE money!

LK: Tell me about your successful textbook.

DH: It's called *Living in the Environment* (1st to 4th, Canadian editions). And it's sciences, but not only. Also politics ... geography ... ethics. Because we ALL live in the environment.

LK: What will you miss the most?

DH: Absolutely the students.... I liked working directly with students, with people, getting things done. I liked the Dean's office, because there were always problems to solve, projects, check them off your list, feel the progress. And not too much time wasted in meetings—that was the Dean's job!

LK: I think we can agree—after the past two years of teaching online—that teaching should not be done primarily by/through a machine.

DH: It's not so fun ... so it doesn't convey enthusiasm.

LK: You officially retired in June—and there was a catch-up party for you in September at The Fox and Fiddle. What are your retirement plans?

DH: Well, I'm having fun with YouTube now, and making videos on environmental stuff. And then I'm going to do a "Udemy" course (see www.udemy.com). If it works, you get half the tuition. Kindle books too. And I have a drone, which I'm learning to fly.

LK: Part-time online teaching? Wow...

DH: Apparently, you rust out if you don't have things to do ... and I don't want to take up golf!



Dave Hackett demonstrates how to enjoy retirement!

Photo by Sean Hackett

So You've Been Called to the Principal's Office (Dean's Office)

Robin Gendron, Professor of History and NUFA Grievance Officer

I've only been a Grievance Officer for a year and a half, but I've already noticed one situation in particular that keeps coming up and seems to cause a great deal of (needless) anxiety for some of our members. Imagine the following:

You're having a good day and then, out of the blue, you receive an email from your Dean asking you for a meeting. There's a problem or an issue or there has been a complaint and the Dean wants to meet with you to discuss it. Your heart skips a beat; you start to wonder what's going on and whether you're in trouble. Your day is ruined. And then it gets worse.

A little further on in the message, the Dean informs you that you can have a NUFA representative accompany you to this meeting. And your heart skips several more beats. 'How bad is it that I need to have a NUFA representative with me at the meeting', you think to yourself. 'And if it's that bad, am I about to lose my job'?

It can be unnerving enough being called to your boss' office without worrying that the issue is so serious that you need a NUFA rep to go with you. But the short answer to that last question is an emphatic 'No!'

As a matter of fact, under our CASBU and FASBU collective agreements the Dean is obligated to inform a faculty member that they have the right to be accompanied by a NUFA representative in any interaction with the Employer (ie the Dean) that might involve or lead to discipline. In fulfilling this obligation, the Dean is in no way escalating what is often a minor issue into a more serious, job-threatening problem.

While it is natural to feel a little anxious about being asked to meet with your Dean, I can categorically state that being advised to bring a NUFA rep with you should NOT add to your anxiety. Just the opposite. Having a NUFA rep by your side should be a source of comfort to you. Not only is it nice to have an extra pair of eyes and ears – or even a notetaker – at this type of meeting, but more than that, making sure that NUFA members are treated fairly and appropriately is what the Grievance team and NUFA are all about.

Jennifer Barnett: “Energizer Bunny”

Interviewed by Laurie Kruk

LK: I am meeting today with Jennifer Barnett, who has been retired 35 days...! Congratulations...NUFA News has three basic questions: the first is, what do you feel was your most important contribution to Nipissing, over your career?

JB: I see my career as starting in another place, and continuing at Nipissing, because it was all about Education (not “schooling”). I think the biggest difference I made was helping people who are going to become teachers. The biggest contribution was helping Nipissing maintain its reputation as a good place to learn to become a teacher. And I always put the students first. Meeting them in the office for hours, helping them out, conferencing etc.

I also sat on NUFA Executive for years, did Collective Bargaining, Senate, did an awful lot of advocating for other people. I saw Nipissing as a community, and I think that’s a beautiful thing.

That being said, the biggest thing was my attention to its students, they are why we are here.

LK: I can’t argue with that! Second question: What will you miss the MOST?

JB: Again, the students! I felt like the Energizer Bunny; the students were my battery. I’m very much an extrovert, so I get my sense of wellness from being with other people. Over the course of the day, I may have seen a hundred students, and then I’m just spinning like a top! I always felt an incredible sense of joy teaching. When you’re teaching and when you realize every single person is hooked on everything you’re saying.... It’s such an incredible feeling when you have that bond with your students. Hoping every one of my students get that feeling.

LK: Sounds like you were a gifted teacher... Not everybody has that bond.

JB: No, not always. It’s an awful lot of work; I would spend eight hours on my lesson plans, resources ready so I had all my ducks in a row...and even ducks that aren’t expected, to expect the unexpected!

LK: What are your retirement plans?

JB: I have all kinds of things I want to do, but I’m here in North Bay because of my parents...and I have a dog, Sadie.

For thirty-four years, I have been taking care of other people. I coached in the school system for years, giving in service to other people, following the rules. I got a lot of joy out of it. But I am taking it easy right now.

Retirement plans? Connect with nature, connect with my art, connect with my dog.



Jennifer Barnett

Photo by Todd Horton

And the most beautiful thing has happened, over the last month.... I'll be walking the dog, doing the dishes, or cleaning the living room. And all of a sudden I stop, and realize I am tremendously happy. And there's such a feeling of ... contentment.

CASBU Bargaining Update

Sarah Winters, *Associate Professor of English and President of NUFA*

“9 in 10 Canadians cutting back on spending amid inflation: Angus Reid survey”³

“Families struggling to afford summer camp as inflation stretches budgets”⁴

“Skipping meals and cutting back: How some Canadians are dealing with higher cost of living”⁵

It's an unpleasant and unavoidable reality that the cost of living has increasingly risen due to inflation. Gas, groceries, and other essentials are at all-time historic highs. Given this, does a \$64 raise sound fair to you? How about \$32 the year after that?

This is approximately what the university is offering its contract faculty in the current round of negotiations. That is, the employer's decreasing offers of 1%, 0.5 and 0.5% salary increases over the next 3 years simply does not equate with their own stated objectives of growing revenues, including an increased focus on recruiting international students and pursuing others means to grow revenues. Nor does it keep up with the high costs of inflation or move us any closer to closing the wage gap with other similar-sized institutions (our contract faculty are currently among the lowest paid in the province).

Moreover, the value of CASBU contracts for the 2022-23 Spring/Summer semesters and Fall/Winter semesters is \$4,296,000 (approximately). This means that the Employer's current financial commitment to all CASBU Members for this year is an increase of \$42,960—less than a third of the average annual salary of a FASBU Member (\$134,296)—and *less* than that in future years.

As a CASBU member you put in lots of hard work: before your courses, revising assignments and the syllabus plus updating your lesson plans, during the course, and even after when you may be asked to provide letters of references and so on. ***You deserve recognition for your hard work and fair pay!***

In other important matters such as supporting your research efforts, supporting you to become a full-time employee at the university, recognizing that creed-based leaves should be in the Collective Agreement, and providing the same full tuition exemption that FASBU and all OPSEU Members are eligible for to you and your family members: the university has not yet shown any willingness to entertain these proposals.

The university has sent us a message and that message is clear: they do not value and support their contract faculty. For that reason CASBU recently held a strike vote.

CASBU members have spoken! In a historic show of support for the bargaining team, our members have empowered the NUFA Executive to call a strike if a satisfactory settlement cannot be reached. Conciliation has been scheduled for December 12 and 21. We hope the conciliator will help the university to see the value in our members by assisting us to reach a fair and equitable Collective Agreement.

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2078445123662>

⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/summer-camp-inflation-1.6510659>

⁵ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/business/skipping-meals-and-cutting-back-how-some-canadians-are-dealing-with-higher-cost-of-living-1.6100828>

NUSU

On September 2nd, NUSU reported concerns around support for international students at Academic Senate. Within this report, concerns were outlined regarding the intake of Post-Baccalaureate Programs in light of the housing crisis, program sustainability, lack of clarity on supports available, lack of on-campus employment opportunity and mental health concerns. NUSU expressed that they have voiced concerns over the years with no improvement. A town hall was proposed in hopes for the community to come together and have a unified approach to provide a learning environment that supports all students' academics and well-being.

Following Senate, Administration did not agree to the open format of the town hall and were not open to communicating the details of the event via email blast. NUSU still proceeded and was happy to see members of administration in attendance. Anonymous submissions and open mic dialogue reflected several alarming concerns regarding international student support.

To summarize, students raised concerns for the following: academic integrity, increased tuition fees, insufficient cultural support, removal of students during winter break from residence, inconsistent telecommunications, operating on a skeleton crew, mental health/well-being and cultural insensitivity.

NU Staff raised concerns about the onboarding process for new hires regarding international students. Staff were unaware that there was a staff member trained in ESL support on campus. The employee directory to date does not have contacts under "International Initiatives". Faculty expressed the need for international students to have a community. Faculty requested that a chart be created for everyone to understand where to send students for support.

NUSU proposed the following solutions to the BOG and Senate:

- Commit to allocate 50% of International Student Revenue to International Student Support (currently 40% is allocated to recruitment and 10% to student support in the internationalization plan)
- Commit to collect data regarding the supports that international students require (as stated in Senate this is not currently being done)
- Commit to do a third-party assessment of the resources we have available to international students on campus
- More town halls for more opportunities to listen to our biggest stakeholders, the students
- Commit to the ethical practice of informing new international students of local issues (housing)
- If a staff member is on leave, have a contingency plan for their interim replacement with strong communication and transparency
- Cultural sensitivity training
- Commit and communicate priorities to the biggest stakeholders, the students
- Long-term commitment plans: new residence building

NUSU held another town hall for international student feedback on Thursday, November 3rd from 12pm to 1:30pm at the Fedeli Room (F210). All NU students, staff, faculty and administration were invited to join. Minutes will be circulated from this town hall.

NUFA

Nipissing University Faculty Association