

CUPE 3287 Newsletter

News from Nowhere

University of Saskatchewan Sessionals' Union



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Susan Robertson, our union sister, will be deeply missed.

In Memoriam: Dr. Susan Robertson

Dr. Susan Robertson, a dedicated and long-term member of the Department of Sociology, passed away suddenly on March 21, 2021. Dr. Robertson was highly respected within the Department of Sociology; an admired sessional lecturer and Research Associate; and a truly valued friend and colleague. Susan's door was always open to those who needed an ear, and she was never at a loss for words with her quick wit and compassionate humour that always had undertones of great wisdom. Family was of the utmost importance to her. She was a caring and

"Susan's door was always open to those who needed an ear..."

compassionate wife, mother, sister, aunt, and friend. She is survived by her daughters Dani (Curtis) and Alex Robertson-Boermsa, her large extended family, her many friends, and her trusted furry companions.

Susan's Life and Career

In her capacity as Research Associate, Dr. Robertson was an active researcher on numerous sociology projects, ranging from breast cancer survivorship and workplace harassment to the history of Saskatoon's Community Clinic. She enjoyed applying her exceptional abilities to parsing

elements of critical social theory. Susan was cherished by her colleagues, putting in endless hours to support all of those in the Department and beyond.

Susan was born in Quill Lake on October 14, 1955. In 1965, she and her family moved to Saskatoon, where she attended school at Brevoort Park, Walter Murray Collegiate and the University of Saskatchewan. She received her B.A. (1978), M.A. (1989) and Ph.D. in Sociology in 2002.

"Susan mentored and inspired thousands of USask students over the years."

Dr. Susan Robertson's 35-year career as a Sessional Lecturer began in 1986. She designed, taught, or had an imprint in some way on many of the department's undergraduate courses, pouring her boundless creative and intellectual energy into each one. Susan mentored and inspired thousands of USask students over the years. Current and past students sent unsolicited notes reflecting on her teaching excellence; how they "grew from her wisdom" and her encouragement "not to sacrifice the integrity of thought but rather lean into challenging and complex topics".

Susan was also a highly respected, contributing union sister in CUPE 3287, the local representing sessional lecturers on campus. Her activities in the union began in the early 1990s, coinciding with the formative years of the local. In 2008, she held the elected position of President, served on the union's negotiating team, and for years was Recording Secretary. We can expect to hear hoots of delight from a graduate student 30 or 40 years from now whose thesis topic is a social history of the sessionals' union, when they come across her minutes in the archives because Susan had the most exquisite penmanship.

Dr. Susan Robertson will be remembered for her enduring passion for knowledge and education and her dedication to her students and colleagues.

Dr. Susan Robertson Memorial Book Fund

The Dr. Susan Robertson Memorial Book Fund has been established to honor Susan Robertson's legacy. This fund supports the work of sessional lecturers within the Department of Sociology. Dr. Robertson was an avid reader and this fund, established in her name, will allow sociology's sessional lecturers to draw upon the fund in order to purchase books of their choice.

-Elizabeth Quinlan

President's Report

The theme of this report, I suppose, is big things and small (but important) things.

Under the heading of small (but important) things, our Local has achieved quite a lot these last few months, both at the Sessional Joint Union Management

Committee (SJUMC) and elsewhere. For instance, members who received grants to purchase equipment in support of remote instruction through our [Academic Development/Professional Development Fund](#) were no doubt surprised to find that their grant had been treated by the University as a personal taxable benefit (meaning that up 30% of the value their

grant was withheld from their pay). Our Local argued successfully that this was not consistent with Canada Revenue Agency policy nor with past practice regarding allocations from the Fund. The members affected have now either received a refund of the tax withheld or a revised T₄ which will result in the amount withheld being refundable when they file their income tax return for 2020.

On a similar scale, in the Fall term some of our members who were not teaching in that term found that their University Library borrowing privileges had been prematurely cut off following their last appointment. After raising this issue at the SJUMC, it turned out that this was partly an artifact of Library operations moving to primarily online delivery in response to COVID-19. Library borrowing for sessional lecturers who are not currently teaching has now been restored to the pre-COVID status quo (i.e., two months prior to and two months following a sessional teaching appointment). A side-effect of dealing with issue, however, has been to highlight just how meagre the status-quo is. We are continuing to push for a further extension of Library privileges for sessional faculty (so that they are similar to those currently available to retired staff and USFA faculty).

Progressing up in scale, in our [interim agreement](#) [pdf, 113 kb.] with the University, ratified in October of last year, both parties agreed that the maintenance period for Right of First Refusal would “extended by one additional sessional year...for each sessional year or portion of a sessional year that the operation of the University is significantly affected by the University’s response to the COVID-19 emergency.” Despite this, it came to our Local’s attention that ROFR had been

allowed to lapse for some our members in the Winter, 2021 term. This clear violation of the agreement was challenged at SJUMC – the Employer has acknowledged its non-compliance, and we expect a successful resolution soon.

Moving on, though, to even bigger topics: We will soon be back into collective bargaining.

As some of you will recall, our Local was about to head into collective bargaining in the spring of 2020 – just as COVID was shutting down University operations and disrupting...well, nearly everything. The University proposed the current interim agreement (which expires on August 31st of this year) as a kind of stopgap – pleading uncertainty about the future of the University’s operations and finances – and we brought it forward to our members for ratification on that basis. A provision of that agreement, however, is that negotiations for our next collective agreement “will commence within six months prior to the expiry” of our current agreement – i.e., right about now.

“[O]ur Local was about to head into collective bargaining [...] just as COVID was shutting down University operations and disrupting...well, nearly everything.”

At our special membership meeting held (via Zoom) on February 12th, we elected a new Negotiating Committee, consisting of Patrick Bulas, Jeffrey Klassen, Jacob Semko, and Stavros Stavrou, together with me, Vice-President Brian Zamulinski, and Will Bauer (who will be continuing as our CUPE representative while Ann Iwanchuk remains on secondment to CUPE national). The Committee intends to use the

proposals developed last year as the basis for our bargaining priorities heading into the next round of collective bargaining, which may get under way as soon as mid-May. We will be continuing to meet as a committee in the interim, however, refining our proposals and developing new ones.

The next round of collective bargaining will be among the issues discussed at our

upcoming membership meeting, to be held via Zoom on Friday, April 16th, starting at 3:30 PM. (For more information see the meeting announcement in this newsletter.) As always, I encourage all members of CUPE 3287 to attend.

-William Buschert

CUPE SASKATCHEWAN - 56th ANNUAL CONVENTION

March 11, 2021

1st Virtual Convention

Your Community Union

CUPE Saskatchewan Convention 2021 marked a significant milestone: this was the first virtual convention in CUPE's history. The COVID-19 Pandemic required the CUPE SK Executive to adopt an alternate, novel, and creative approach to organizing and hosting the annual convention and a virtual format was the option selected to enable delegates to synchronously and asynchronously participate on a provincial scale.

A total of 270 people, of which 197 were voting delegates representing 31 locals, participated in the Convention. CUPE National President Mark Hancock and Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury; Saskatchewan Federation of Labor (SFL) President Lori Johb; and Ryan Meili, Leader of the Official Opposition, Saskatchewan NDP, brought greetings from their respective organizations and addressed the Convention. CUPE 3287 was represented by two delegates.

"[T]his was the first virtual convention in CUPE's history."

Key Issues Discussed

Three issues received some consideration at the Convention: (a) the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic; (b) privatization; and (c) member engagement. CUPE Saskatchewan President Judy Henley highlighted the need to work harder on behalf of racialized, Indigenous, disabled, women, and young workers. The struggle against for-profit private care homes, privatization, P3s, and workplace health and safety continues. The Report by the Task Force on Member Engagement was presented to the delegates. Two points were stressed: (a) how do we get more members observing our campaigns; and (b) how do we get those members upwardly mobile to grow our capacity.

Lori Johb (SFL) focused on the crisis in long-term care and wage challenges (freezes, government cuts to services, cost of living increases), stressing that strength and solidarity are need today more than ever. She encouraged locals to consider membership in the SFL to strengthen

solidarity and to create a stronger collective voice for labor. Ryan Meili, Leader of the Opposition, NDP stated that “going back to ‘normal’ is not good enough because the ‘normal’ was never good enough.” He encouraged CUPE’s involvement with and presence at the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC). CUPE National President Mark Hancock stated that there appears to be a growing interest in affiliating with CUPE across the country and this needs to be given some attention. He stressed CUPE members and locals to become involved with CLC. Charles Fleury, CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer, reported that although revenues are down due to layoffs, job eliminations, and reduced economic activity, expenses have also been down. The financial position of CUPE National continues to remain solid.

Panels and Debates

One panel presentation was held: “Mental Health and Resiliency during COVID”. A video, COURAGE Philippines, informed the delegates that labor and union activists in the Philippines continue to be harassed and persecuted. Most recently, Bloody Sunday – March 7th, 2021 – saw a number of activists arrested and detained by the police.

“Going back to ‘normal’ is not good enough because the ‘normal’ was never good enough.” -Ryan Meili

A total of 16 resolutions and 10 constitutional amendments were presented for debate. The resolutions focused on union affairs (7), privatization (3), political action and workers’ rights (2), health (2), equality (1), and solidarity (1). Only 5 resolutions and 7 constitutional amendments were debated and carried. A motion was made and carried to refer the remaining resolutions and constitutional amendments to the Executive.

Of the constitutional changes, two are worthy of note. The Diversity Executive Member position was replaced with three positions: the LGBTQ2+ Executive Member Worker of Disability Executive Member; and Racialized Executive Member. The term “Worker(s) of Disability” was amended to “Worker(s) with Disability”.

Delegates at the 2021 CUPE Saskatchewan Convention adopted a motion that CUPE Saskatchewan reaffirm its affiliation to the Saskatchewan NDP for the period April 01, 2021 to March 31, 2022. The 2021 Union Activist award was presented to Donna Smith (Local 4828). Elections yielded the following results: (a) Vice-President CUPE SK – Dylan Breland; (b) Recording Secretary – J. R. Simpson; (c) Trustee (three-year) – Patricia Gausman; (d) National CUPE Regional Vice-President – Kent Peterson; and (e) National CUPE General Vice-President – Judy Henley.

Respectfully submitted,

-William (Bill) Gulka

Understanding the Use-Mention Distinction and Academic Freedom

High school Scrabble players are not allowed to play offensive words. To help them to avoid them, the Scrabble authorities provide them with a complete list of the forbidden words. While this approach is amusing, the words have to be *mentioned* to ensure that they are not *used*.

Obviously, there are words that one should never *use* in a classroom. On the other hand, if one is forbidden ever to *mention* the same words, in quotations say, it means that the discussion of certain topics is proscribed.

"Obviously, there are words that one should never use in the classroom..."

The proscription is a violation of academic freedom.

Some students react negatively to some objectionable words even when they are

merely mentioned in a quotation. When this happens, the appropriate thing to do is to explain the use-mention distinction, to affirm that it is wrong to use the word, but also to affirm that academic freedom permits the mention of the word.

Instructors should take this approach. To do otherwise is to treat university students as less mature, less rational, and less capable of moral and intellectual growth than high school Scrabble players.

Administrators should do so as well when confronted with a complaint from a student. To investigate the mere mention of offensive words is to treat policies such as the Discrimination and Harassment Policy as superseding academic freedom. Obviously, while the policies are important, they should be interpreted in ways that are compatible with academic freedom, if possible. And understanding and acknowledging the use-mention distinction helps make it possible in these sorts of cases.

-Brian Zamulinski

Successful Applicants to our Professional Development and Tuition Waiver Fund

Our Professional Development and Tuition Waiver (PDTW) Fund Committee meets regularly to review applications to this fund. We are pleased to announce the

winners for this cycle of PDTW fund applications:

- **Dinesh Ramon**, \$1,475 for research
- **Peggi-Lyn Gatlon**, \$240 for conference
- **Yliana Baron Gavidia**, \$367.50 for professional dues
- **Stavros Stavrou**, \$3000 for remote teaching equipment

- **Carly Priebe**, \$1906.98 for remote teaching equipment
- **Vanessa Ellis Colley**, \$1,466.40 for tuition
- **Samantha Black**, \$1,466.40 for tuition
- **Mark Doerksen**, \$1,466.40 for tuition
- **Nazanin Charchi Aghdam**, \$1,466.40 for tuition
- **Karissa Patton**, \$1,466.40 for tuition
- **Kyle Dase**, \$1,466.40 for tuition

- **McKelvey Kelly**, \$1,466.40 for tuition
- **Krystl Raven**, \$1,466.40 for tuition

Congratulations to all of our successful applicants!

To apply to the PDTW fund in order to help cover your professional expenses or tuition fees, contact us at

cupe3287grants@gmail.com or visit <https://3287.cupe.ca/resources/funds-and-benefits/>.

Anyone who has taught within the last 6 months as a sessional lecturer at USask qualifies for this funding.



"Are the contestants ready to organize?"

Membership Meeting, Winter 2021

Via Zoom

Show your solidarity with labour justice!

Invitation links have been distributed to the membership via email. If you have not received your invitation email, please contact

cupe3287@gmail.com

Friday, April 16, 2021

3:30pm – 5:00pm

Agenda on following page





MEMBERSHIP MEETING

April 16, 2021, 3:30 PM

Via Zoom

(Meeting invitations circulated via email)

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Roll Call of Officers
3. Reading of the Equality Statement
4. Adoption of Minutes, Special Membership Meeting, February 12, 2021
5. Secretary-Treasurer's Report
6. News and Communications Officer's Report
7. Executive Report
 - a. SJUMC Report
 - b. Negotiating Committee: Update on preparations for collective bargaining
 - c. Pandemic Response and Reopening Task Force Updates
8. Motion: "CUPE 3287 calls for the University to implement a policy whereby, before being allowed on campus, all instructors, staff, students, and visitors are required to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 unless they can provide medical documentation indicating that they are ineligible for vaccination due to an underlying health condition."
9. New Business
10. Adjournment

CUPE Equality Statement

Union solidarity is based on the principle that union members are equal and deserve mutual respect at all levels. Any behaviour that creates

conflict prevents us from working together to strengthen our union.

As unionists, mutual respect, cooperation and understanding are our goals. We should neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any

individual or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Discriminatory speech or conduct which is racist, sexist, transphobic or homophobic hurts and thereby divides us. So too, does discrimination on the basis of ability, age, class, religion, language and ethnic origin.

Sometimes discrimination takes the form of harassment. Harassment means using real or perceived power to abuse, devalue or humiliate. Harassment should not be treated as a joke. The uneasiness and resentment that it creates are not feelings that help us grow as a union.

Discrimination and harassment focus on characteristics that make us different; and they

"Discriminatory speech or conduct...hurts and thereby divides us."

reduce our capacity to work together on shared concerns such as decent wages, safe working conditions, and justice in the workplace, society and in our union.

CUPE's policies and practices must reflect our commitment to equality. Members, staff and elected officers must be mindful that all persons deserve dignity, equality and respect.

-Mark Hancock, National President

-Charles Fleury, National Secretary-Treasurer

Contact the Union

Our office in McLean Hall remains closed due to COVID-19 safety measures. We continue to receive postal mail as well as voicemails and email.

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If you would like to submit an article to our newsletter or would like to join our committee, please contact news.cupe3287@gmail.com