

Executive Director's Message:

Representation on the Provincial Stage



Paul Reniers
Executive Director

A key lesson from the last few rounds of FSA bargaining has been the need for our voice to be heard at the provincial level. We saw this in 2012 when we fought the pay increases mandated by the government that were lower for our sector than for the rest of the public service. We saw this in 2015 when BCIT was willing to work with us on research issues and the provincial government denied them the authority to do so.

The provincial public service bargaining regime is complex. The primary goal of this complexity has been to restrain public sector salaries. A major consequence of this complexity has been that public institutions struggle to keep pace with a changing economy. Here's how it works.

Rather than being lead by the head of the public service or by the Premier, the person in charge of public sector bargaining in BC is the Minister of Finance. As a result, bargaining is seen by the government primarily as a cost rather than as an opportunity to improve public services or meet other public policy objectives. Within the Finance Minister's office, a Deputy Minister serves as CEO of the Public Sector Employers' Council, or PSEC. PSEC oversees bargaining across the public sector and is responsible for administering the bargaining mandates issued by the Finance Minister. These mandates govern rounds of collective bargaining and agreements made with unions between rounds of bargaining.

PSEC is made up of representatives of the province's six sectoral employer councils and the Public Service Agency, which acts as the employer for direct government employees. Our sector is the Post-Secondary Employers' Association (PSEA), which is not to be confused

with the separate University Public Sector Employers' Association (UPSEA). In its wisdom, the government separated out the major research universities from other post-secondary employers. When things that have so much in common get divided, the results can be hard to explain. Royal Roads University is in UPSEA while BCIT is not. Vancouver Island University, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and the University of the Fraser Valley are in PSEA and Thompson Rivers University is in UPSEA. The other sectoral employer councils are the Public Schools Employers' Association (BCPSEA, to distinguish it from our sector), Health Employers' Association, the Community Social Service Employers' Association, and the Crown Corporation Employers' Association.

These different associations allow the government to tailor mandates to different sectors of the public service. For instance, after seeking savings in the public school system in the early 2000s and from the health sector in the late 2000s, the government turned its attention to our sector in 2012. While the mandate for the rest of the public sector was for 4% wage increases over two years, our sector was given a mandate of 2% over two years. Job action by the FSA and other unions won us pay raises on par with the rest of the public sector, so the government mandated a \$75M cut in funding to the sector to be achieved through administrative services delivery transformation. In the 2015 round of bargaining, UPSEA members were allowed to create and modify classifications while the PSEA mandate prevented institutions from doing so.

These bargaining experiences have created a compelling case for the FSA to move into the provincial scene in a significant way. One motivation for membership in CAUT was to build linkages with UPSEA faculty asso-

collective
bargaining

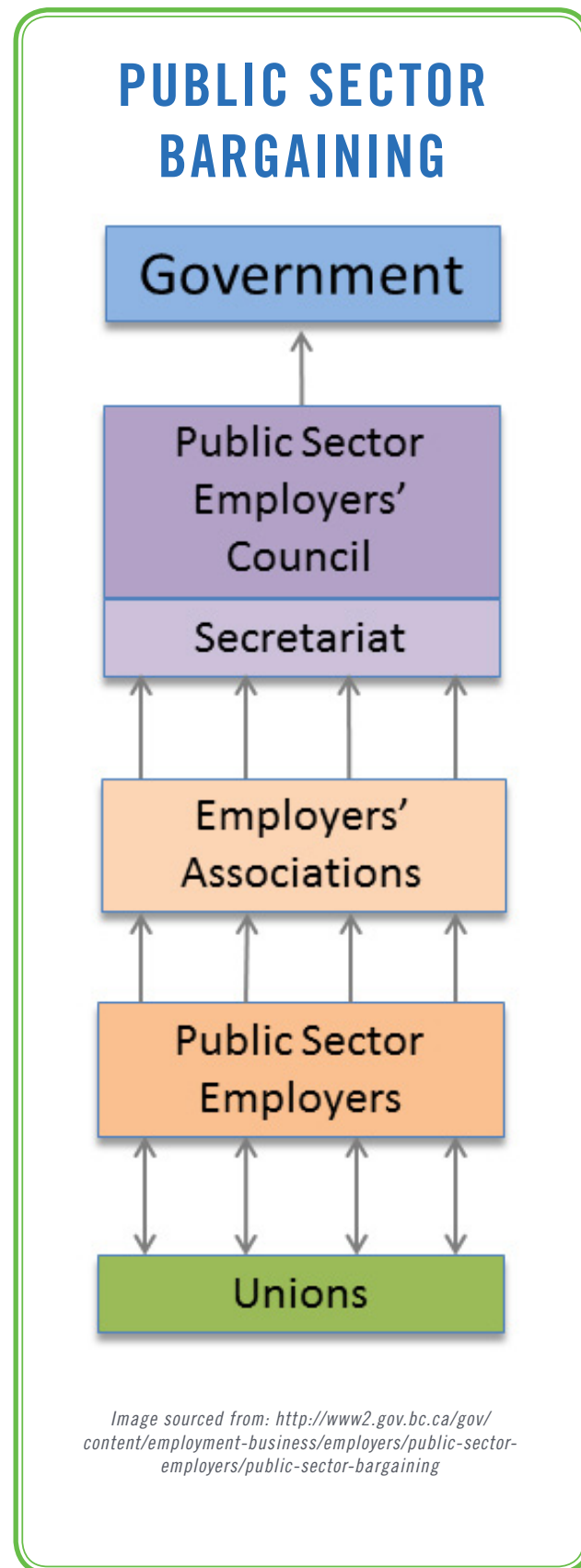


ciations and to challenge the perceived differences between BCIT and institutions like TRU. Our trial membership in the BC Federation of Labour has already brought us into discussions about how PSEC and PSEA will behave under a new government. We have also begun discussions with other unions about how collaboration and co-operation in bargaining might benefit us all.

The current collective agreement doesn't expire until mid-2019. Our chance to influence how that agreement is negotiated is right now. The provincial government will be listening to stakeholders as it prepares for bargaining. Heading to the table before us in 2018 will be the nurses bargaining association and negotiations with doctors over their rates. How the new government approaches the next round of bargaining may well be determined by the time the Minister of Finance delivers the provincial budget in February 2018, only four months from now.

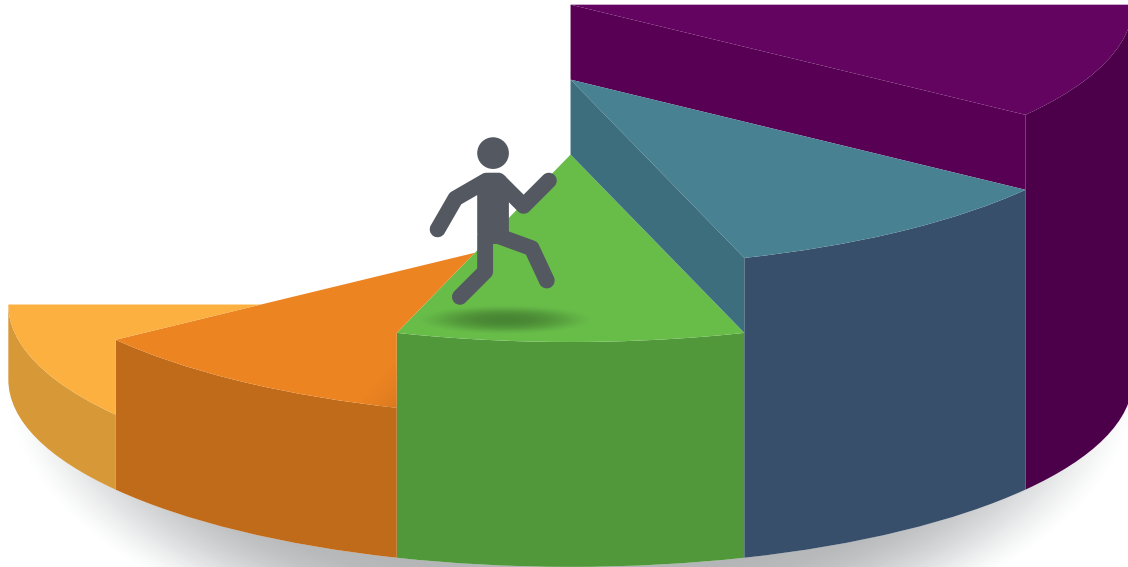
The extensive work done to represent FSA members with the previous government has prepared us well to influence this government. Our issues are well defined and understood by senior public servants. Having included all parties in our government relations work, we had already met with the new Premier, new Finance Minister, other new cabinet ministers, the Leader of the Green Party, and our new MLA Janet Routledge.

The FSA is making a strong effort to represent our members on the provincial stage because we know it's crucial to protecting our rights and advancing the interests of BCIT's faculty and staff.



Representing PTS Instructors

Heather Neun, Union Counsel



Enforcing the rights of precariously employed FSA members

Most Canadian post-secondary institutions generally employ some form of instructional “contract academic staff”, whose employment is of a short-term nature. In the FSA’s bargaining unit at BCIT, these members are employed as Part-Time Studies (PTS) instructors on short-term auxiliary employee contracts, sometimes referred to as “yellow contracts”. Over the last few decades, an increasing proportion of the FSA membership in this employee category earns either all or a significant percentage of their income from PTS instruction (Article 4.3.1). Some programs in departments like Interior Design and Digital Arts are staffed largely using PTS instructor contracts. ISEP and PELD are staffed entirely through such contracts.

It’s an FSA priority to mitigate and redress the undue precarity and insecurity that characterizes the employment experience of far too many FSA members, like PTS instructors. Precarity is the term commonly used within the post-secondary education sector and beyond to signify a form of employment that is ‘flexible’ for employers but leaves employees with limited supports and uncertainty about what work they can count on. In ISEP, for example, there was a time in the not too distant past when our members didn’t know until days before the term start date what contracts they’d be awarded. Imagine finding out the week before that your contract hours were going to be significantly less than expected, and not knowing if you would need to seek other sources of income. How is this fair to any professional expected to deliver high quality educational services, let alone one dealing with the reality of the high living costs in the Lower Mainland?

Enforcing the right to normally be rehired

The right “to normally be rehired” to teach a course is the cornerstone of PTS instructors’ right to a modicum of secure employment (Article 5.2.5.2.7). What this means in any given situation isn’t always clear and the FSA’s representation work is focused both on clarifying the scope of this right and enforcing the right whenever it is violated. We do this through union grievances and by supporting employees who want to file employee grievances. At any given time, the FSA has various grievances on the go: there are always grievances centered on the rights of PTS instructors and we will continue to press hard on this particular representation lever. We also engage in representation that takes other forms, such as working with managers who value and are concerned about these employees, and who understand that the rights and interests of our members dovetail perfectly with the interests of BCIT.

Fear about “rocking the boat”

Many members who approach the FSA to inquire about issues such as their right to teach courses they’ve taught before express fear about being seen to be “rocking the boat”. We’re often asked to refrain from taking further steps to enforce our members’ rights and this concerns us because fear is not conducive to employee morale, psychological health and engagement, or to the delivery of high quality educational services.

Educating members about their rights as PTS instructors

For the FSA’s part, we try to meet fear with improved understanding. We do member education through publications and events like Fair Employment Week, at our monthly Tech Rep meetings, and through direct education in high PTS-concentrated programs and departments. Our objective is to empower these members to come forward early on when concerns and questions first arise. In one department, we’ve been inspired by several members who, in pressing for redress of their own rights, have put the interests of their colleagues at the forefront and acted in solidarity with other PTS instructors. If you or a colleague has a question or concern, don’t hesitate to contact the FSA.

Educating Faculty about the scope of their PTS colleagues’ rights

The FSA also works to educate our members who are regular employees (Article 4.1) and enjoy rights of ongoing employment and seniority. It’s been encouraging to witness the growing interest and concern expressed by this group and to see individual members undertaking direct representation of their colleagues. We are particularly heartened by Faculty who regularly advocate in this way on behalf of PTS instructors. Consider how you can get involved through direct efforts to support your colleagues and by participating in BCIT’s recently announced Ed Talks 2017, a forum that will hopefully address issues in PTS and the concerns of PTS instructors.

Message to BCIT students and BCIT Student Association

We also have a message to share with BCIT students and the BCIT Student Association. In an economy characterized by growing precarity - including for those who have stellar educational and other credentials – there are hidden and not so hidden costs when institutions rely on these short-term and ‘flexible’ terms of employment of instructors. BCIT students might want to consider the following challenges and gaps experienced by PTS instructors:

- the lack of support and opportunities for their ongoing professional development
- insufficient time and resources to consistently prepare quality educational materials
- the lack of office space and paid office hours for private consultations with students
- contracts that don’t cover the hours needed to meet course and program learning outcomes

Calling on BCIT

Our members who work as PTS instructors sometimes tell us they feel treated and regarded as “second class employees” even though they deliver many of the same courses and programs as regular instructors. This sense of a secondary level of employment does not come from the quality of their expertise or the work they do. It shows up in areas like the gap in benefits and facilities, and management’s failure to listen or consult with them about matters that have educational significance. PTS instructors should not feel like second class employees. The fact that many do indicates that BCIT needs to support those managers and the management direction that recognize the value that PTS instructors bring to BCIT. Employees owe a duty of loyalty to their employer and the reciprocal of this is for the employer to invest fully in all of its employees. This shift towards mutual consideration will inevitably result in high returns at the level of employee engagement and, in turn, for the quality of BCIT’s educational programming. When employees feel heard and valued they are usually willing to go the extra mile. Let’s advance together through serious dialogue!

“ I can't make long term plans in my work or my life because I never know if I'll have a job next semester. ”

MAKE IT FAIR

bcitfsa.ca/few

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 **CAUT**

FSA Caucus on Part-Time Studies (COPTS) Message:

The FSA is concerned that many instructors at Canada's post-secondary institutions, including BCIT, are trapped in precarious, short-term contract work, and the number seems to be growing. Contract work has quietly gone from an interim stepping stone to a career-long experience. As a result, many contract academic staff (or PTS instructors, as they are known at BCIT) experience chronic employment insecurity, poorer benefits or no benefits, and earn inadequate wages. And the deleterious effects go far beyond the faculty.

Every year, thousands of Canadian post-secondary educators are denied the opportunity to participate in (and be paid for) all aspects of academic work, including research and participation in departmental and institutional processes along with their teaching. This has serious implications – not only for contract academic staff – but for their students, permanent faculty colleagues, and the integrity of post-secondary institutions.

Together, BCIT and the FSA can change this situation. We can improve the employment conditions of contract academic staff and limit the inappropriate and undue use of auxiliary contracts.

In support of the FSA's vision of "Outstanding careers through outstanding employment conditions," it is time for BCIT to act with us to do more for our members who work in Part-Time Studies. It is time for significant changes that will show these members that their work and contributions are equally valued. It is time that PTS instructors' dedication to BCIT and quality education is recognized. And it is time for the "second-class" treatment of PTS instructional work to end.

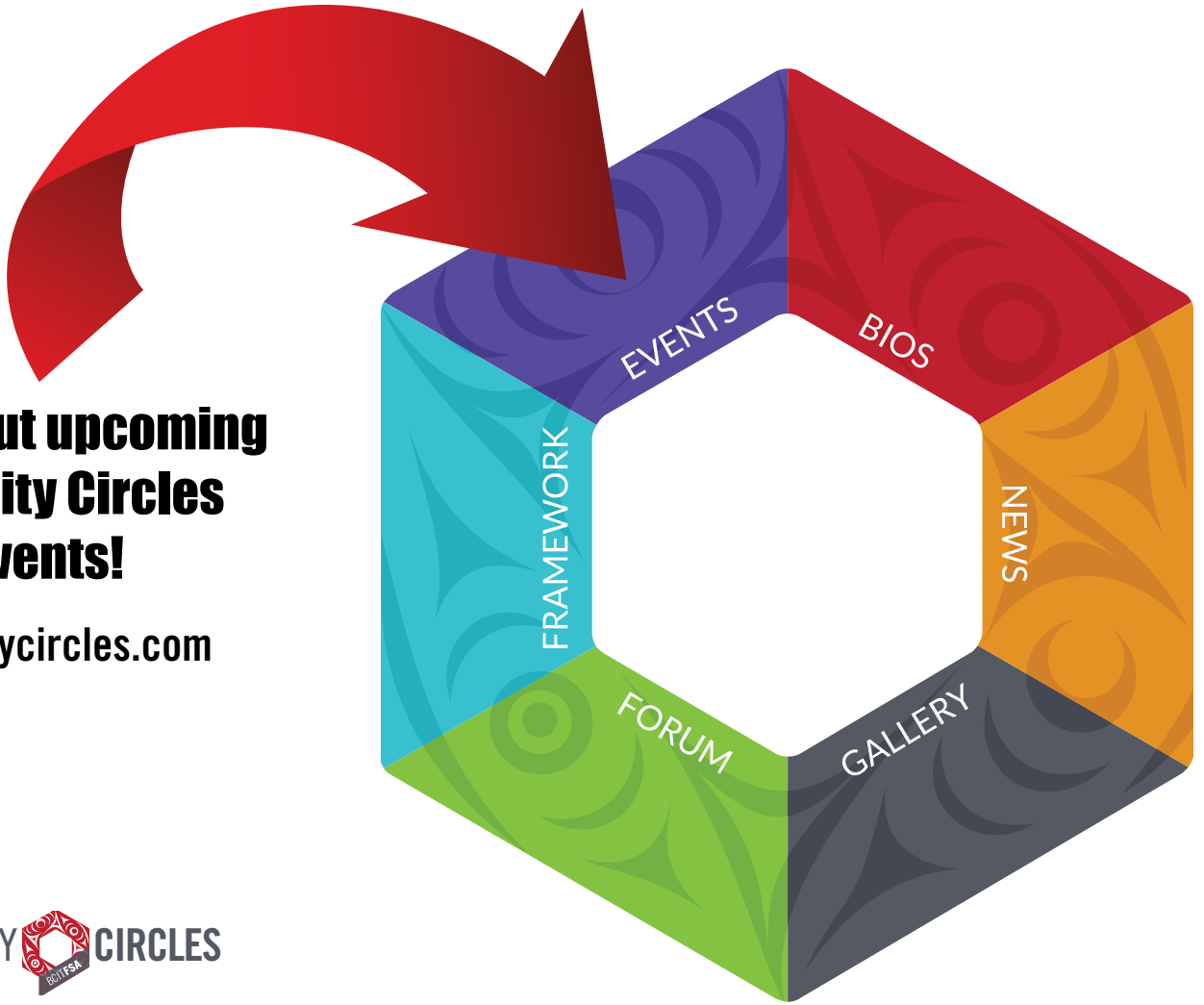
The FSA is committed to working to protect all our members from the two-tiered treatment of faculty and the erosion and "casualization" of our core bargaining unit work. BCIT should act with us to offer fair working conditions for all and guarantee a quality educational experience for every student.

The FSA expresses our support to those who stand for the fair treatment of all academic staff regardless of employment status. All educators should receive fair compensation for teaching, research, and service.

We can do better. Make it fair.

Check out upcoming Diversity Circles events!

diversitycircles.com



MEMBER PROFILE: Winnie Pang



A long-serving member of the ISEP instructional team, Winnie has worked closely with her colleagues as they have navigated the ebb and flow of ISEP's relationship with BCIT. Winnie is currently leading the working group of instructors' engagement with BCIT's "ISEP Re-Envisioning Project". Her ready smile and strong commitment to her students and the program are a standout.

How long have you been at BCIT? I have been teaching at BCIT since September 2008.

What motivates your work? It gives me great satisfaction when I enable and empower students to learn independently. In my specific area of expertise, I work at finding the root challenges and barriers for students for whom English is not their first language to their making English a language which they are able to think in, learn with, and express themselves in. When I discover a challenge, the next task is to find a way to train the students to work towards overcoming it as independently as possible. The reason for this is that learning a language and making it a true part of oneself takes many years and much hard work. Our international students do not have the luxury of time; when they are in their BCIT program, they need to be ready to run. They need to be ready for the intense professional training while they are still perfecting their English language proficiency.

What lesson(s) has working at BCIT taught you? I have learned that very few people in BCIT understand what ISEP does. There are many misconceptions of the challenges that international students face. The common view towards international students is that they come of their own free will and so they should ensure their own success. We need to realize the reverse is also true, that

we have invited them here to gain professional credentials and they come trusting that we will provide the training and the support for them to succeed.

What would make your work even better? What will make my work better is when BCIT allows ISEP instructors to share our expertise and to partner with instructors in professional and trade programs in supporting student success.

How does the FSA support your work at BCIT? The FSA has worked hard to facilitate the institution's understanding of the role that we are playing and the greater role that we can play in ensuring BCIT continues to be an institute of excellence for professional and trade training. FSA has worked to foster trust and provide leadership in ISEP's development these past 9 years into a program that provides excellent training for international students to ensure that they are ready for success.

What motivates you to be involved with the FSA? The FSA takes the time to listen and understand our particular challenges, and to empower us through providing sound advice and in journeying with us to find our voice in the institution.

What keeps you busy when you're not at work? Over the last 9 years since I began to work at BCIT I have presented in a number of conferences on topics such as *'Beyond the Benchmarks: Learning from Critical Incidents Encountered by Advanced ELLs'* and *'Teaching Dialogic Strategies to Adult English Language Learners, Applying principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics'*. I have also been busy publishing pieces such as a pending chapter entitled *Teaching Dialogic Speaking Strategies in a Canadian EAP Program* in *'International Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills in ELT'*.

LINK
MAGAZINE

LINK magazine is making a stronger effort to include extraordinary BCIT faculty and staff stories in the pages of their monthly magazine, to accompany the great student stories they already share.

If you have a great story/research project/idea to share - be it personal or related to your work - email editor@linkbcit.ca and help them tell the very best stories from BCIT and Beyond.

www.linkbcit.ca

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: Nancy Knaggs



Nancy Knaggs is the FSA's newest board member, elected in spring 2017. Nancy brings with her a strong sense of the need to hear from and connect with more FSA members. An alumni of BCIT, Nancy works on the MAKE+ team in Applied Research

and has experience acting as project lead, programming, designing and fabricating electronic circuits, and machining mechanical components. She is also a member of the BCIT Emergency Response Team which emphasizes team work and communication.

Why is it important for the FSA to be a strong advocate for members?

The FSA must be a strong advocate for members to help establish and maintain outstanding work conditions that then set the foundation for excellence in education. I am convinced that BCIT can be the first choice for those seeking a post secondary education and outstanding employment conditions are key. Ensuring FSA members know their rights and empowering them to exercise those rights contributes towards building an excellent workplace.

What motivates you to be involved with the FSA as a board member?

As a board member, I want to ensure members concerns are heard and that they are provided with the means to resolve problems that arise. It is equally important that they have the opportunity to be engaged in decision-making. I want members to know if they have any concerns they can approach and speak to me or any board member.

What is something you have learned since joining the FSA board?

In the short time I have been a Director, I have been

encouraged that there are many opportunities to learn from and participate in the various committees. These committees will help make gains for members and advance BCIT as an organization. What committees you say? Check out the listing of the many committees on the FSA website.

How does the FSA support your work at BCIT? The FSA provides me with the information and the skills to meet workplace challenges and information on opportunities to further my career.

What was the last conference or course you attended? The last conference I attended was the IDTechEx conference on emerging technologies in Santa Clara with over 200 exhibitors from around the world and attendees from over 40 countries. During the conference, I attended five master classes on topics covering wearable electronics, sat in on 24 presentations by experienced business leaders, and visited more than 40 booths. It was exciting to see and learn about emerging technologies for wearables. The main takeaways were the focus in the development of a new wearable technology should be on assessing the needs of the end users in order to identify problems where new technologies can add value and basing development on extensive research to provide a clear view of the real situation regardless of popular conception. On hearing experts emphasize the importance of user studies/focus groups, I was proud that over the years my department, MAKE+, has provided these very same services to our clients and continue to promote the use of these services to our clients. I saw that we have been on the right track and have added value to our client's projects!



STAFF PROFILE: George Talbott



George joined the FSA staff team as a Labour Relations Representative in May, 2017. In a few short months, he has proven to be thoughtful, curious, considerate, intelligent, articulate, and thorough. He's excelled at forming strong working relationships with members, colleagues, and managers. His insight and good humour make him a valued addition to our team.

What excites you about working with the FSA? We have a talented team. There's an exceptional amount of knowledge and skill in this place, and I enjoy learning from my coworkers. Working on member issues is particularly interesting—whenever I'm able to help resolve a problem or find a solution for one of our members, I feel as if I'm doing some good.

What brought you to this work? I've always had an interest in progressive politics and issues. I've been an activist—mostly around issues associated with free trade and our national sovereignty—provided free legal advice to protestors, worked with the Council of Canadians, and helped create a union to represent freelance writers. As well, I've been doing labour relations now for more years than I care to admit, and wanted to find a way to merge those two streams. It's been a positive experience. I still have much to learn about BCIT's unique environment and our collective agreement.

What is important to you when you represent members? Representation is definitely more art than science. I've worked with dozens of union and management representatives over the years, and appreciate that there are many styles and approaches. For me, learning to represent people means finding the balance between pragmatism and idealism, and attempting to merge that with my own style. These aren't unique dilemmas. Everyone that does this kind of work is going to have their own point of view and has to reconcile these issues. Ultimately, I want to find positive solutions that last, and fix problems so they don't come back later.

Why do you think members should be involved in their union? I was raised by a single mom who belonged to the non-academic staff association at an Alberta university. Job security and decent working conditions are vital for people, and those benefits extend to their families and communities. Without member participation, your union is less able to represent you and deliver on its program. There really is a power that comes from de-

cisive group action that can have tremendous effect. Show up to your union meetings, talk to your Tech Reps and the FSA Board. The more you know the more likely you'll be able to influence the environment in a positive direction and take concerted action with others when it's most needed.

What is important to you about public post-secondary institutions?

What's important about PSE institutions is that they produce citizens, people capable of engaging in workplaces, but also in the broader community. An ideological push has moved the burden of educating citizens from societies on to individuals: students who now need significant amounts of loans to complete school, and individual instructors who keep giving more even as their employers continue to pull back on funding, resources, benefits, and job security. At some point, I'd like to see a return to greater funding of PSE institutions and a dialogue about the value they play in enhancing not just productivity but the quality of life in a community.

A favourite...

Book For many years, I've enjoyed reading about people's experiences in the world of work. I would recommend *Wages* by local author John Armstrong. It's a great and funny read about the many miserable jobs he held as he finally worked his way up to a paying job as a journalist at one of our nationally-owned local newspapers. I previously worked for the same corporation and enjoyed his take on life in that world.

Music Music? I'm really no expert. Discovering lately that I like listening to Steve Earle, who's also not a bad actor.

Film I get a kick out of watching and re-watching *Searching for Sugarman*, a documentary that I think is still on Netflix. It's a true story about a musician that had disappeared from the public eye, and a nice tale about redemption and finding meaning. If you don't know the story, it's much better if you watch the movie without looking up its plot points.

Food I love food. These days sushi and pho are my go-to foods for a healthy evening meal.



Contribute to the FSA Voice!

Do you have news or a story that you think other FSA members would be interested in?

Consider contributing to the FSA Voice! Contact Kyla at 604.432.8569 or kepstein@bcit.ca

Upcoming Events

Nov 4 Board of Directors Meeting
9:00am-4:00pm

Nov 8 Tech Rep Meeting
2:30-4:30pm
SW3-3615

Nov 22 Board of Directors Meeting
4:00pm-8:00pm
SE16-116

Jan 10 Tech Rep Meeting
2:30-4:30pm
Town Square D

find out more on bcitfsa.ca/calendar

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search 'BCITFSA Group'

loop.bcit.ca/groups/BCIT-FSA
BCIT internal only

We acknowledge that the BCITFSA and its members' workplaces are located on unceded Indigenous land belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish Nations.

the FSA Team



Teresa Place
President



Kenzie Woodbridge
Vice-President



Terry Gordon
Treasurer



Karl Hildebrandt
Director



Zaa Joseph
Director



Shannon Kelly
Director



Nancy Knaggs
Director



Paul Mills
Director, Associate Members



Silvia Raschke
Director



Ted Rutledge
Director, Associate Members



Paul Reniers
Executive Director



Heather Neun
Union Counsel



Christie Nagy
Labour Relations Rep



Tess Rebbitt
(On Leave)



Adrienne Smith
Labour Relations Rep



George Talbott
Labour Relations Rep



Sascha Swartz
LR Information Officer



Kyla Epstein
Member Engagement Officer



Maria Angerilli
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Debbie Kinequon
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