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COCAL XII – Uniting Precarious Academic Workers – Get Involved!

This August, Edmonton will welcome 250 precarious academic workers from across North America to participate in the [Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour's](#) twelfth biennial conference (COCAL XII). Local 3911 is the hosting committee and we are currently accepting registrations and paper proposals to occupy panels and workshops.



COCAL started as a grassroots forum to both discuss and change the degraded working conditions of adjuncts and other non-tenured faculty. Every other year COCAL hosts an international conference that provides an important space for creating awareness about these challenges and for mobilizing response. The conference draws contingent educators from all geographic regions of North America, and from all levels of higher education, including non-credit adult education, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, universities, and public and private non-profit and for-profit institutions. Our delegates are from all disciplines taught in higher education and may be part of a union or association or from a group that has not yet unionized.

This year's theme is *Empowering Precarious Academic Workers in Perilous Times*. Plenaries will include important topics such as organizing and reorganizing, diversity, equity, and human rights, job security, living well in a precarious world, and formulating actions for moving forward. We are pleased to announce our keynote speaker, [Dr. Pam Palmater](#), a Mi'kmaw lawyer, author, social justice activist, and Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University from Eel River Bar First Nation in New Brunswick.

We encourage our members to participate in this unique event by either attending as a conference delegate (Early Bird rate available until June 1) or by submitting a paper proposal. Be sure to visit our website for full conference details (www.cupe3911.com).

[View Registration Details](#)

[View Call for Papers Details](#)

Working Towards Solutions at OCUFA Conference on Precarious Academic Work

By Dougal MacDonald

On February 11-12 in Toronto, contingent academics, students, full-time faculty, journalists and policymakers gathered at the “Challenging precarious academic work” conference, organized by OCUFA, the Ontario Coalition of University Faculty associations. CUPE 3911 co-Chair Dougal MacDonald attended the conference.

The two-day event featured local and international speakers and provided a forum for sharing experiences and developing solutions to the alarming rise of part-time, insecure work at universities.

Speakers included:

- Karen Foster, Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Rural futures for Atlantic Canada, Dalhousie University
- Guy Standing, University of London, author of *The Precariat – The New Dangerous Class* (2011) and *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens* (2014)
- Robyn May, University of Melbourne, researcher on the Gender and Employment Equity: Strategies for advancement in Australian universities project
- Maria Maisto, New Faculty Majority, USA
- Jonathan White, Policy Officer, Universities and Colleges Union, UK
- Glen Jones, Professor of Higher Education at OISE/University of Toronto

For individuals unable to attend the conference, OCUFA recorded all sessions. They will be made available on the OCUFA website which can be found at <http://ocufa.on.ca/>.

Faculty Bargaining Impasse at Athabasca University

By Dougal MacDonald

On February 25, Athabasca University (AU) professor Bob Barnetson posted some important information on the Friends of Post-Secondary Education website. The Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA) is currently conducting collective bargaining with their employee, Athabasca University.

Barnetson reported that on February 23, the AUFA Salary and Benefits bargaining team met with the AU Board of Governors’ bargaining team to exchange opening proposals. Wrote Barnetson:

“AUFA’s opening proposal included small cost-of-living increases over three years (2%, 2.5%,

and 3%) plus a \$500 increase to PD (professional development funding), a \$125 increase to the discretionary benefit fund, and an additional vacation day. The Board failed to provide an opening position. Instead, the Board team made a presentation about AU's strapped financial position and eventually suggested that layoffs are imminent, regardless of the outcomes of bargaining. Interim AU President Mackinnon briefly and unexpectedly appeared at the negotiations. He reinforced the Board's desire for AUFA to help the Board make cuts."

Barnetson continued on to say: "Bargaining is scheduled to continue on March 7. Absent a Board proposal, this meeting is unlikely to generate any results. Absent agreement by March 31, the matter will be referred to arbitration. Settlements across the province are relatively favorable, and our comparators should have us in somewhere around the 2% mark for the next two years."

Barnetson suggested that the current state of bargaining reveals two things about AU: "(1) The administration is so disorganized that they can't even put together an opening proposal, thereby violating the union contract and the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA), both of which require them to negotiate. (2) The university is apparently in so much financial trouble that layoffs are imminent regardless of what concessions workers might give."

In conclusion, Barnetson addressed an important question to Alberta's new Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Marlin Schmidt: "When will the government sack this Board and senior executive? There is just no way forward with these folks in charge. And that works an unfairness on our students."

Grow your skills with CUPE Training and Workshops

CUPE AB offers numerous training and workshop opportunities throughout the year, including its annual week long school, taking place in Red Deer this May. Included this year, is a new Introduction to Human Rights workshop.

Weeklong School takes place from May 29- June 3 at Red Deer College and is packed full of training opportunities for those who want to get involved with their union or learn more about common workplace issues.

Workshops include topics such as Bargaining, Stewarding, Occupational Health and Safety and a new Introduction to Human Rights session. View registration and workshop descriptions [Here](#).

Visit www.cupe.ca to find out more about all CUPE training available and to check out some free online and print resources.

The CUPE newsletter is published by Local 3911. We welcome your submissions, letters and comments. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily those of CUPE Local 3911.

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