

## Report to LUFA on CAUT Aboriginal Forum – Saskatoon, SK, November 2009

The first Aboriginal Forum for Aboriginal Faculty was held in Winnipeg in February, 2008. As I did in 2008, I again represented LUFA at this second “Navigating the Academy” forum for Aboriginal Faculty put on by the CAUT in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on November 13-15, 2009. There were pipe ceremonies each day to open the proceedings followed by plenary sessions by a number of well known Aboriginal academics including, among others, Dr. Eber Hampton of the University of Regina, Dr. David Newhouse, Chair of Indigenous Studies at Trent University, and Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, Associate Dean for Indigenous Education at the University of British Columbia. Topics covered were “Establishing Indigenous Knowledge within the academy”, “The role of elders in college and universities”, “Negotiating the multicultural classroom”, “Making alliances for research and creating research/knowledge mobilization opportunities through program models”, “Working conditions for Aboriginal academic staff”, “Career development”, “Managing work/life balance” and “Supporting Aboriginal graduate students make the leap from student to faculty member”.

These plenary sessions were followed by discussion circles led by each plenary speaker. As last time, a number of recommendations emerged from discussion circles on the last morning of the forum. General support was expressed for the continuation of this CAUT event. There was some discussion about where to house the listserv for Aboriginal faculty across Canada and it was generally agreed that Marie Battiste holds the most comprehensive email network and that we would continue to work through her Indigenous research network to disseminate emails pertinent to Aboriginal faculty. There were discussions around the development of general support network for Aboriginal faculty both within and across institutions. Strategies to support Aboriginal academics through the tenure and promotion process were discussed. Dr. Newhouse provided us with a short document entitled, “Indigenous Knowledge in the Academy: Lessons from the Trent Experience”. The CAUT provided us with a document entitled “Bargaining Inclusivity for First Nations Academic Staff.” I was proud to be able to report that LUFA negotiated the “grow our own” program in our new collective agreement. I also shared the unique features in my contract pertaining to committee work and traditional ceremonies. Laurentian stands well compared with her counterparts in terms of making progress towards respecting Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous peoples.

The final hour was a very tense one; Dr. Pitawanakwat from the University of Winnipeg came to the microphone and challenged Dr. Hampton about his past decisions as the former president of First Nations University. Tension in the room was palpable as Dr. Hampton took 15 minutes to defend the choices he made after February 2005 until his resignation. Afterwards, a number of us former faculty from FNUC came to the microphone and tried to shift the focus from Dr. Hampton to the other factors that contributed to the situation there. After a number of rebuttals, Dr. Wuttunee from the University of Manitoba brought the room back into balance by singing “The

Grandmothers and Grandfathers Are With Me”. We finished in a good way with a pipe ceremony and prayers.

All in all, this forum was well worth attending. Participants all expressed their appreciation to the CAUT for organizing this event. It is always uplifting to hear from some of the more experienced Aboriginal academics in the country who act as my mentors and inspire me to continue my work here. Once again I thank the Canadian Association of University Teachers for taking the initiative to organize this event and I thank the Laurentian University Faculty Association for sponsoring my attendance.

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