



2014 Scholarship Recipients

Brittany Bernauer
Mitchell Brinton
Allison Collins
Alanna McPhail
Jesslynn Speidelsbach

Brittany Bernauer



Brittany Bernauer

Brittany was born and raised in Humboldt, SK where she attended the Humboldt Collegiate Institute. After graduation in 2011, she attended St. Peter's College for her first year of Arts and Science. Brittany moved to Saskatoon to continue her education at the University of Saskatchewan and in September 2014 she will pursue a degree in the College of Education to become an elementary school teacher.

For the past summer and currently Brittany has worked as a summer student at the Crop Production Services Ag Retail in Humboldt. Her father is GSU member Randy Bernauer.

2014 GSU scholarship recipient

"I would like to thank the Grain and General Services Union for this generous scholarship to help me further my education and pursue my goal in becoming a teacher."

Today's youth is the future. Their abilities, goals, and education will help shape what the province and country will be like in the future. We currently have a good economy with many good job opportunities open to us. Our parents have worked hard to ensure that we have safe, healthy and respectful work environments. It will be the youth of today that must ensure that this continues and expands. Unions are the main driving force behind these benefits and are there to protect and represent the working class. This is why it is very important for young people to connect with and become involved in unions, so that they are able to fully understand their rights as workers and comprehend where these rights came from.¹

The Canadian Labour Congress is an organization that represents the rights and interests of more than three million workers from coast to coast. Within this organization, a major focus is on youth entering the workforce. "The CLC supports the work of progressive young activists across Canada, and promotes the engagement of young and new workers into their unions and labour councils." Young activists are beginning to step up and take charge and in order to challenge the present economic climate, young workers must take an active role in their union, as well as, develop numerous partnerships with other progressing allies and show leadership within communities.²

Many young workers are having to settle for low-wage, dangerous and non-unionized jobs that are for the most part unsecure. Today's young people must

¹ Carter, A. (2013). Do unions still matter to young people? Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/news/do-unions-still-matter-to-young-people-1.1395676>.

² Canadian Labour Congress. (2009). Young Workers. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/human-rights-equality/youth>.

become involved to fight for better wages, safer environments and more secure jobs for themselves, as well as, for others entering the workforce. In the article, "Do unions still matter to young people?", Michael Borrelli says that "Unions represent the last pillar holding up the diminishing middle class in the developed world. They bring together workers with common interests to fight to ensure that their members aren't abused or mistreated." Borrelli also states that when looking for a job "Unions represented the possibility of attaining a modest lifestyle where I could buy a home, work a regular schedule that allows me to pursue my interests and raise a family, and the ability to, one day, retire."³ I believe that young people need to be educated about unions and their history. If we understand where the union has been we can better understand where it needs to go. We also need a firm understanding of our current labor laws. If employees do not know their rights or employers' obligations to them, it would be very easy to take advantage of them. Young people also need to learn to look ahead. The workplaces of today are vastly different from those of several years ago, due largely to technology. They will only continue to grow and change which means that unions need to think about the future issues and goals of their members.

Once today's youth are educated in these areas, they will be more likely to seek out unionized jobs so that the goals and beliefs of a union continue to serve its members for years to come. Active and knowledgeable participants will make the union voice stronger and our workplaces better.

³ Do unions still matter to young people?

Mitchell Brinton



Mitchell Brinton

Mitchell grew up in Regina, SK. After high school, Mitchell travelled to the west coast of Canada where he worked as a salmon fisher. He is currently residing on the east coast of Canada, attending Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he is working towards an undergraduate degree with a double major in both economics and creative writing.

Mitchell is the son of GSU Local 1 member Joe Wilkie who works for Viterria in the Balgonie terminal.

2014 GSU scholarship recipient

"I would like to say thank you again for selecting my essay, and for all the GSU has done and continues to do in support of the Canadian labour movement."

Youth and the Future of the Labour Movement

By Mitchell Brinton

Looking forward, the role of youth within the labour movement will be to reinstate the importance of the union through both progress and awareness. A major problem facing the labour movement today is the prevalence of ignorant and anti-union sentiment expressed by corporate, political, and media outlets. In order to allay such concerns, it is important for entities within the labour movement to continue progressing forward against issues as they arise, all the while maintaining a firm stance on the foundations the labour movement has built in the past, and to show that the achievements of the past are still resounding today.

In such times as now, where the labour movement does not have the full support it deserves, it is especially important that senior union leaders work closely with youths in order to ensure that the next generation of leaders within the labour movement are well prepared. Transitory periods are especially vulnerable for organizations under rhetorical attacks of defamation, as the intent of such aggression is to shake confidence and disorient. But the labour movement is used to opposition, and in fact, thrives from it; the labour movement was born out of the necessity to provide labourers with basic rights, and to this end the labour movement has made many great advances but is still as necessary as ever to solve the myriad of problems that still impact the well-being of labourers across Canada. With proper guidance, these problems will be identified and dealt with by the emerging youth as they naturally concern themselves with the labour movement.

The foundation the labour movement has built itself upon is of great importance to the future of the labour movement, but is often dismissed as a mere occurrence of the past or forgotten outright. In the fray of an economic crisis, unions are often scapegoated as both a cause and an encumbrance to the situation, but the often made claims, that union regulations reduce efficiency or that higher wages for the working class drives inflation, are transposed proposition. It is important to stress the monumental achievements of the labour movement, such as the institution of Saskatchewan's Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1974, as such monolithic statutes provide workers in Saskatchewan with basic rights that vastly improve their well-being and reduce the anxieties and pressures of time sensitive work; the labour movement's fight for fair wages helped boost Canada's economy by creating a middle class, providing the country with more tax payers, consumers, and industry. The rational economist knows that recessions come and go regardless of best intentions and are not brought about one sole cause but rather an accumulation of causes, and the insights and statistics provided by like-minded professionals can be used to show that not only has the labour movement been an integral part of Canada's work force in the past, but that proponents of the labour movement are still required today. Of course, many of these accomplishments were the work of union members of the past, but it is important for the union members of the future to boast about the achievements in the effort to assert itself in a dominant position.

No organization can be held up on its previous accolades alone. It is equally important that the labour movement continues to be a progressive entity in the future of Canada's work force. In this endeavor the youth will play a critical role as a part of the labour movement. I do not claim to have any direct solutions to specific problems facing the labour movement today, but I will attempt to outline the

path of least resistance that may be taken by youth members of the labour movement. First and foremost, as has been stated above, it is important for youth to work alongside senior union members in order to grow as confident leaders within their field. The next challenge then faced by an emerging class of youth would be to identify problems in real-time as to put themselves in the most advantageous position to dispel them. Finally, the most difficult and most important step is to conquer such objectives efficiently and successfully. This is always easier said than done, but the youth have an array of specific tools and skill sets that, if utilized, give them a great advantage.

It could be said that one of the biggest blockades facing any cause the labour movement challenges is the problem of ignorance and awareness. Growing up in the prairies, spending my formative years in Regina, Saskatchewan, I have drawn conclusions about the problem of awareness that have been exacerbated since researching the topic of this essay; even though my father is a member of GSU and has spent his whole life working for companies like Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and Viterra, I still find myself, at twenty-three-years-old, ignorant to the plights of the labour movement and organizations like the GSU other than the odd bumper sticker or flyer on the forum wall of a hockey rink. Diving into research for this writing has opened my mind up to the first-order problems faced by the union, but my time studying logic at Dalhousie University has drawn a second-order parallel: the problems that face the labour movement are esoteric to a large number of people who are not directly involved with the labour movement. Anything esoteric is only so because of circumstance, and circumstances can change and often do with effort. The youth can play an integral role in this change by increasing the spread of awareness tenfold using the internet and social media outlets as their tool.

The youth of today, who may otherwise be looked at as the leaders of tomorrow, were born into a post-information age and have grown up in relation to the technologies that drive the times. Youth are fluent in the use of such technology and for them such technology has replaced conventional, politically biased forms of media. The strongest and most obvious example of the youth's utilization of social media as a tool to spread awareness is *the occupy movement*. The occupy movement became so popular by beginning within a connectivity-oriented medium, the internet, and created a profound level of awareness of the inequalities between the lower-to-middle classes and the upper class, spawning slogans such as "we are the 99%", and sparking action and protest on a global scale. The most interesting thing to note about the occupy movement is that it was started not by any radical or well-informed specialist, but by a snowballing group of youth's spreading awareness through social media outlets such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. With a small group of dedicated and passionate youth members of the labour movement controlling the distribution of an increasingly more relevant source of media, the labour movement could find an amount of support that would drown out anti-union sentiments.

In conclusion, you cannot look towards the future without accepting the youth as next generation of leaders. The role the youth play in the labour movement will be tremendously important to its necessary evolution and will consist of equal parts prevention, in the form of controlling a more authentic and relevant medium of media, and action, by having gathered adequate support in doing so.

Allison Collins



Allison Collins

Allison Collins was raised in Oxbow Saskatchewan.

She is currently working on completing her Bachelor of Science in nursing. Once she has finished her degree she plans to travel and work as a registered nurse then she hopes to earn her Master's degree in nursing to become a nurse practitioner.

Her mother, Mona Collins, works at Crop Production Services out of Oxbow and is a member of the Grain and General and General Services Union - Local 1.

2014 GSU scholarship recipient

"Thank you so much for considering and accepting my scholarship application."

Youth involvement in the union is important. Youth are an integral part of the union.

Not only do they benefit from learning about social justice and equality, but the union also benefits because not only are youth the future of the union, they also benefit from the fresh perspectives, ideas and needs brought forth by the youth. Therefore the union accommodates youth by putting forth opportunities for them to participate and learn. After reading through the Grain Service Union website the roles that youth play in the union quickly became apparent. Youth may find their niche within the union in many different roles; youth can be active members of the union including leaders and learners.

The union is welcoming to youth wanting to participate and learn. There is a summer camp open to youth thirteen to sixteen where the youth can learn about dealing with union related topics in their own lives. By teaching youth about social justice and equality at a young age it develops youth with knowledge of the union and their rights. There is also a youth action conference for people thirteen to thirty. This is an opportunity for youth to learn and to generate a discussion around issues they feel are important.

The events put on by the union help youth develop leadership skills and therefore create potential for youth to become leaders in the workplace. By participating in union events and attending conferences and meetings and voicing their concerns they are demonstrating

leadership. They can take on leadership roles by becoming union representatives so their co-workers can approach them with their concerns. They can also take on a less official role by being advocates for social justice and equality in the work place.

As a new employee it is intimidating and one may not fully understand their rights or not want to step on people toes so they could be at a higher risk for mistreatment in the work place. Being unionized allows young employees to feel confident that they are in a safe workplace with fair wages. The union has representatives at no additional cost from their membership fees that can provide advice to these young employees if they feel they are being mistreated or if they have question. On the Grain Service Union website they encourage members to bring concerns forward early even if they are small which is reassuring to new members who may feel like their concern is insignificant.

The union is accommodating to youth and participate in a mutually beneficial relationship where the youth are given opportunities to grow and learn and the union is able to utilize the new ideas brought forth by the youth. The role of youth in the union is to be active participants, leaders and learners. The union facilitates youth taking on these roles and makes it possible for them to continue to develop into future roles as active members of the union.

Alanna McPhail



Alanna McPhail

Alanna is attending the Automotive Service Technician program at SIAST. She plans to complete her apprenticeship and receive her journeyperson's ticket. She is a strong advocate for people with disabilities rights in the workplace.

Alanna's mom, Brenda, is a member of GSU Local 5 working at the Western Producer in Saskatoon.

2014 GSU scholarship recipient

"Thank you so much for choosing me to receive a scholarship!"

The Role of Youth in the Labour Movement

Alanna McPhail

The First World is a constantly changing place. Things that were thought impossible only a decade ago have become commonplace; what was once revolutionary has become the mundane. Yet despite the near-endless changes, some things remain the same. While the world has progressed much in the last few decades, our workers still struggle for fair and humane treatment in many fields—and so long as workers need to battle for ethical working conditions, there will always be a need for unions and the labour movement.

From ever-changing government policies, to corporations' suffocating grasp on the working class, unions are needed now more than ever. Unfortunately, without new bodies and fresh ideas, the labour movement will come to a standstill. Working conditions will deteriorate—particularly for minorities and those with disabilities—and the lives of labourers will grow even more difficult. Younger people entering the workforce are crucial to the future of the labour movement; their ideas and experiences in our changing society will be critical in maintaining the victories the movement has already achieved, as well as forging a path forward into the future.

Forging a forward path requires the labour movement to have intimate knowledge of issues in our culture as well as how those issues affect workers across the boards. Take, for instance, the employment issues faced by those with mental health conditions. In recent years, we've made large strides forward, both scientifically in the diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions, and socially in how we treat those with mental health conditions. However, our scientific and cultural progress still trips and stutters when it comes time to bringing it into the workforce. Improvements in the science of mental health have led to more diagnoses, particularly amongst young people, causing many to be labelled "unemployable". Life for the employed is seldom much better, those who do have difficult times holding their positions and

have even harder times finding help within their company with managing their conditions. It is a suboptimal situation for workers, to say the least. However, the labour movement has the capacity to improve the situation, particularly with the help of the empathetic younger generation.

For example: Many of the medications required to maintain day-to-day health for those with mental health conditions are outrageously expensive. Some are not covered at all under company health plans, and the high cost means that if employees cannot afford to cover their own medication, they may have to go without. Without these medications, work difficulty can range from "mild" to "nigh impossible" and workers risk the possibility of losing their jobs simply because their company's coverage is too narrow.

Lack of union representation and work-provided support networks are a major issue in overcoming the societal and inner-office hurdles faced by those with conditions. Plenty of workers, struggling to learn and understand themselves, will not speak out for concern of their careers and end up suffering in silence. They need others, such as their union, to rally and fight for these injustices alongside them. Young members of the labour movement have the empathy to bring these issues to light; older members have the knowledge and experience to help make the push for changes. Combined, the two groups have a fair shot at bringing about significant change for those with mental health conditions.

That's only the tip of the iceberg. Young people are incredibly connected through the many tools at their disposal. Despite seeming to be buried in their devices, they are incredibly aware of the world around them and the issues other people face. Despite their knowledge and desire to improve conditions, however, they typically haven't the tools nor experience at their disposal to make changes. That is why it's so important to bring young people into the movement right now: So that they can learn from the older generation of union members and gain the experience to keep the fight for worker's rights going.

While it's an issue that members of all age groups may know about, it's one that many of the younger generation are acutely aware of, either firsthand from their personal lives or second-hand from friends and family. While stigmas about mental health of all varieties are

still everywhere, they're less prominent in the younger generation. Their cultural awareness and ability to relate to the people struggling gives them the drive to start serious change in the way those with mental health conditions are treated in the workplace. By bringing these issues to older union members, younger people can receive guidance in how to seek out change, as well as gain valuable insight from veterans of the movement in how to bring about even more changes down the road.

I've experienced firsthand how beneficial the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next is. In my teenage years, I had the opportunity to attend the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour summer camp. There I learned to understand and immerse myself into the ways of a union. I was chosen by my local to represent us during the camp rules negotiations, which were held with the counsellors chosen as "management." If I had not been guided by the counsellor from our local, and mentored by the other counsellors who were not participating in the negotiations, I would not have known enough to have been able to contribute fully towards the success on the union's behalf. The local-chosen negotiators took our own experiences and the campers' needs and, along with the tips and procedures learned from the counsellors, we did very well in tying them together. This proves that the passing of knowledge from generation of workers to generation of workers provides an incredible boon to the movement, as well as leaving room for vast improvements in the system.

The labour movement has been an incredible engine of change for workplace rights for an astronomical amount of time. It is a well-oiled machine, helmed by people absolutely devoted to the improvement of conditions for the working class, and kept alive through generations of struggles and, well, work. Our predecessors in the movement fought hard to make improvements for the average worker before passing the mantle to their successors. I believe strongly that the knowledge and connectivity of the current generation, coupled with the experience and guidance of those who came before, not only will the labour movement continue to survive: It will thrive on.

Jesslynn Speidelsbach



Jesslynn Speidelsbach

Jesslynn I was born and raised in Grenfell, SK. She is a recent honour roll graduate of Grenfell High School.

Jesslynn will be attending SIAST's Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon, enrolled in the Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technology diploma program. She plans to obtain her diploma and find work in her home province of Saskatchewan.

Jesslynn's father is GSU Sub-Local 1.8 (Viterra - Grenfell) member Kevin Speidelsbach.

2014 GSU scholarship recipient

"I would like to thank the Grain and General Services Union for this financial assistance. With high cost of tuitions this will ease my financial burden greatly. Thank you so much."

Youth and the Labour Movement

Youth and the labour movement, what does that mean to me? Up until recently I wasn't aware what the labour movement or unions were and what they represented. I then learned that my Dad, Kevin, works as part of a union and also that the career path that I am pursuing is also part of a union, so I decided to do some research and find out for myself what they are all about.

The labour movement is the development of a collective organization of working people that come together for better working conditions and treatment from their authorities such as employers and the government. The movement started in the early 19th century and is still present today. The labour movement plays a role in working people's lives around the globe. The labour movement is active and will continue to be active if the next generation keeps it going, that is where today's youth will play an important part.

The youth of today are important people for the labour movement today and in the future. The population of the current working people is aging and the youth are the next generation who need to get involved in the labour movement to keep it active and alive. Youth have a new voice that will represent their generation which will bring new ideas and perspectives and forward thinking to the table. Young people will help sustain the labour movement with renewed energy, creativity and drive.

Young workers are organizing and taking active roles in their unions in order to challenge the current economic climate, as well as taking leadership roles in their communities. Youth are taking the right steps forward by becoming more educated and upgrading their skills.

This will enable them to take over the reins and help usher in change. Working people have the power when they come together to reach a common goal.

From the research that I have done, I have learned that the labour movement may become part of my life and it is important for me to become involved now. The labour movement is about people coming together to campaign for better working conditions and treatment from their employers and governments which I believe is important in everyone's work environment, and encourages me to become involved and do my part. I believe that I can become involved by taking leadership roles within my community and provide a voice for my generation. I feel that because I am a young person, I can bring forward new ideas and perspectives for the future to better help society. I can contribute to society by being involved in the labour movement and making sure everyone has equality in the workplace. The labour movement is prevalent in working people's lives today and if I, and others like me, become involved it will continue to have an affect on people's lives in the future.

I think every young adult should be given the opportunity to be educated and involved in the labour movement if they so choose. The Labour movement has continued for many generations and if youth do their part to keep it alive and active it will continue for generations to come.

Thank you to our 2014 Scholarship Committee

Carolyn Illerbrun
Jim Brown
Brett North

GSU scholarship committee members are provided copies of scholarship essays with references to identifying names or locations removed. Essays are divided into three categories—GSU member, GSU spouse, or dependant—and each essay is then assigned a unique identifying number or letter.

Committee members meet to review the essays, discuss their merits, and choose five scholarship recipients. Upon notifying the GSU office of the five chosen recipients the scholarship committee members are advised of the names of the essay authors.

Scholarship forms and application requirements are available on GSU's web page at www.gsu.ca.

If you have any questions about GSU's scholarship program, please contact general secretary Hugh Wagner or a scholarship committee member.