



# ACCUO

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN  
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY  
OMBUDSPERSONS

## November 2020

**Website: [accuo.ca](http://accuo.ca)**

We encourage all ombuds to reach out to each other during this second wave of the pandemic. Supportive words and caring guidance will help us to remain strong as a community of practice. Even a caring “Hello, how are you?” is a wonderful way to connect and reassure we are here for each other. As well, many colleagues are taking advantage of the increasing number of higher education ombuds webinars and conferences worldwide. These are often offered without a fee, as the lack of need for a venue, accommodation and travel costs, allows us to engage more, learn more, without the constraints of limited ombuds budgets. This strengthens our regional, national and international alliances, as we meet new colleagues and friends in the process.

Keep a journal of these times as it will be interesting to reflect on this period, examining our challenges, our strengths and our resilience. And as you begin that journal, we have a wonderful initiative inspired by our ACCUO Regional Representative Emma Thacker; it is a special reflections writing project. Read below and create....

**The ACCUO Executive is seeking your Written Reflections about Ombuds work during COVID-19! – Emma Thacker (U Toronto)**



The ACCUO Executive is pleased to announce a new project, titled '**Reflections on Ombuds Work during COVID-19**'. As you are all aware, the global pandemic has impacted postsecondary education in many profound ways. From pedagogy to remote services, we are all immersed in a new and evolving education landscape. In acknowledgement of this change, and the challenges (and opportunities) we are all facing, we are looking to document and share member's experiences. We are seeking written reflections related to your Ombuds role in postsecondary education during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

More details on this national, collaborative project will be emailed to all ACCUO members in the coming weeks. If you have any immediate questions, please feel free to contact Emma Thacker at [em.thacker@utoronto.ca](mailto:em.thacker@utoronto.ca). Thank you for considering a contribution to this project!

(Image Source: <https://writingcooperative.com/>)

### **Oh oh...Is your ACCUO Membership Overdue?**

If you have any difficulties with your ACCUO membership renewal, please communicate directly with Treasurer Alexia Wright and let her know the situation. Contact Alexia at [alexiaw@nait.ca](mailto:alexiaw@nait.ca).

### **Upcoming European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE) Webinar**

ENOHE will be hosting an early morning webinar on December 10th, 2020. Carolyn Brendon (Ombudsperson, McMaster U) will be presenting a summary on Canadian higher education ombudsing during the pandemic. Information for free registration and time has been sent to ACCUO members. If you do not have this information, check <https://www.eventbrite.de/e/a-new-year-a-new-abnormal-adapting-to-covid-in-the-new-academic-year-registration-130564797825>

### **ACCUO Executive Changes**

We have another executive change as Laura Reid had to step down from her role as regional representative, member of the Communications team, and assisting with managing the ACCUO website. We thank Laura for her dedicated work to ACCUO and hope she can return to work with us in the future. Thank you to Annette Fraser for volunteering to step into this regional representative role. Annette has worked closely with Laura on the website and just attended her first ACCUO Executive meeting in November.



**Annette Fraser, U Victoria Ombudsperson, ACCUO Executive Regional Representative**

*“Prior to my start in 2018 at the university, I spent several years working in the BC Public Service in various capacities including working as an Investigative Officer with the provincial BC Ombudsperson’s Office. I value sound and fair decision making and throughout my career I have had the opportunity to understand what that means as an investigator and decision maker. As a graduate of the Masters of Arts Dispute Resolution program at University of Victoria,, I embrace the opportunities to transform complex conflict situations into viable options for resolution. Outside of work, I enjoy baking delicious creations to bring joy to my friends and family.”*

**International Relations Committee (IRC) (Julie Boncompain, Ecole Polytechnique Montréal)**

Julie Boncompain said we will not know until March 2021 whether there will be an onsite ENOHE conference in Athens later in 2021. At that point, we may revisit whether ACCUO would consider rejoining as a co-host. Julie is communicating with various international ombuds associations and keeping us informed of upcoming webinars to build the ombuds community of practice. These include: the Australian University Grievance and Complaint Network Communities of Practice webinars, and the University of Kwazulu-Natal and the African Ombudsman Research Centre training and facilitated discussions.

**Communications Team (Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, U Alberta)**

The Communications Team (Remonia Stoddart-Morrison and Rob Thompson) have met twice since September 2020 (October 15th and November 20th) with a focus on two issues: 1) Recruiting additional members to the committee due to members stepping down because of time constraints and job changes; and 2) Expanding the scope of work undertaken by the team. At our next meeting, we hope to have an additional two to three members. We will be exploring the use of social media to promote ombuds work as well as contributions that the team can make towards the ACCUO Bulletin and to the development of the website. If you feel you would like to volunteer time and join this ACCUO sub-committee, contact Rob at [thompsonr@camosun.bc.ca](mailto:thompsonr@camosun.bc.ca) or Remonia at [remonia@ualberta.ca](mailto:remonia@ualberta.ca)

### **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ad hoc Committee (Annette Fraser, U Victoria)**

With inspiration and guidance from Julie Boncompain, the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ad hoc committee was formed this summer 2020. The committee members are: Kwame Addo, Annette Fraser (co-chair), Lavonne Hood (co-chair), Tanny Marks, Heather McGhee, Shirley Nakata, Laura Reid, and Remonia Stoddart-Morrison. The mission of the committee is to collectively take action to address racism and anti-black racism in a constructive way with the purpose to provide advice and make recommendations on EDI matters to the ACCUO Executive Committee. A sub-committee has been tasked with formulating a survey for the members to support ombuds in their self-reflection in their own practices and their own institutions but also in the ombuds world more broadly. The EDI survey is planned to be distributed in the beginning of the year.

### **BC Ombudsperson Systemic Investigation Presentation (Annette Fraser, U Victoria)**

In early November, the BC Ombudspersons Office gave a presentation on systemic investigation to the Western Regional group of ACCUO. The presentation provided insight and tools on how to go about developing an investigative plan and to formulate a special report on findings. In the discussion, some thoughts that were brought up were, whether Terms of Reference for some offices permits ombuds to initiate investigations and what is the interplay between university ombuds and provincial ombuds offices that are mandated to oversee higher post-secondary institutions. The presentation is attached for members to review and to consider whether such a tool can be used in individual offices, working groups or within ACCUO.

### **Cal Caucus Conference**

The 47<sup>th</sup> California Caucus of College and University Ombudspersons conference was successfully re-imagined as a one-day virtual event on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Many ACCUO members attended this event, as conference planners attempted to recreate the atmosphere reminiscent of the rustic and peaceful Asilomar retreat. Keynote Dacher Keltner, from Berkeley University, led a thought-provoking session on the Peril of Power and the role of the ombuds. In the second session, he led a sensitive, self-care session to help ombuds cope with trauma from the long-lasting pandemic. The conference was filled to 100 participants maximum within two days of the registration opening. There were many breakout sessions, mainly concentrating on themes of EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness); in the US, they call it DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness)

## Recent Ombuds Appointments and Departures



**Melanie Chapman, Ombudsperson (Carleton U)** joined Carleton University in May, 2020 following the retirement of Jim Kennelly, who held the position for in excess of 40 years. Prior to her role at Carleton, Melanie spent almost 20 years in the federal public service. She started her career in 2000, working for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in administrative complaints processes (grievances, harassment, and conflict resolution). It was there that she developed a passion for fairness and administrative investigations. In 2006, she was hired as an Investigator at the Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces. Over the following 14 years, Melanie's roles evolved to include Senior Investigator, Executive Assistant to the Ombudsman, and, finally, Director of Investigations (for over a decade). While she's not new to the world of Ombudsmanry, the university context is full of new challenges and a very steep learning curve that she's eager to climb. Melanie is a double alumna of Carleton University and, in her spare time, enjoys spending time with her two large dogs, camping with her husband in their little vintage trailer, and visiting craft breweries.

**Siobhan MacManus, Assistant Ombudsperson (Carleton U)** joined the Carleton community in 2007 as a graduate student and has held various roles across the university, including work as a Teaching Assistant, Academic Advantage Coach, and administrative support in the Paul Menton Centre. She is a double alumna of Carleton and has worked off campus in workplace investigations, assessments, mediations and conflict coaching. She joined the Ombuds Services Team in 2014. In her role as Assistant Ombudsperson, Siobhan provides critical support services to students in distress and attends the majority of academic integrity hearings for the office, facilitating open and respectful discussions and ensuring the process unfolds fairly. Siobhan enjoys meeting students and hearing about their experiences, both on and off-campus; she is an active listener and leads with empathy. Beyond her professional work, Siobhan engages in community-building with volunteer work in the fields of mindfulness, mental health and wellness, ethics and the environment, and peace-building.





**Associate Member Joelle Thibault** has been a lawyer since 1989 (with LLB and PhD in law). She is an experienced ombudsman, coach and mediator, recognized for more than 25 years for effective and fair resolution of conflicts. She has managed more than 3,000 cases as an ombudsman for various organizations, including the National Bank of Canada's Client Ombudsman and Hydro-Québec's Employee Ombudsman. Joelle has completed more than 2000 coachings and mediations and has worked with various arbitrators and mediators in Europe. She was vice-president of eResolution, a company specializing in managing internet negotiation, mediation and arbitration services for consumer, insurance and business transaction disputes. Joelle is a member of the Quebec Bar and the Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines, the Canadian Forum of Ombudsman (serving six years on the Board of Directors) and the International Ombudsman Association. She is a mediator accredited by the Quebec Institute of Mediation and Arbitration. She is on the Board of Directors of the Montreal Women's Centre.

**Nadine Pelletier and Christian Morin, Ombuds (Sainte Foye Cégep)** We have a new institutional membership with two ombudspersons joining us from Sainte Foye campus, and hope to provide biographies so you can meet them in our next bulletin. Welcome to Nadine Pelletier and Christian Morin from Sainte Foye Cégep, Quebec.



**Michel Villard, Ombudsman (Ecole Polytechnique Montréal)** Long-time friend, colleague, and friend, Michel has left his position. Michel has worked closely with ACCUO executive on numerous issues of concern for safeguarding the ombuds role in universities and has given unique perspectives on the ombuds role at FCO/ACCUO national conferences and ENOHE international conferences.

*In Michel's words, "After working for more than thirty-five years in different fields related to human resources, and the six last years as an ombudsman at Polytechnique Montréal, it's time for me now to look for new horizons. Even if I am looking to this new period of my life with happiness, it doesn't mean that I am not a little bit sad to leave the ombudsmanship environment because during my six last years as an ombudsman I had the chance to live great professional and human experiences. These six years gave me the opportunity to meet people who were engaged in their work and engaged with their colleagues, always ready to help. Also, I will always remind these wonderful moments of humanity on the west coast or these new and rich experiences I have lived meeting our European colleagues. Thank you my friends in allowing me to be part of your wonderful group and I wish a long life to ombudsmanship."*

**Next bulletin: January 2021**

The ACCUO Executive wish colleagues, their families and friends, a safe and peaceful rest during the holiday season. Keep warm, keep hopeful. We welcome any news, including any missed biographies, or articles for our next bulletin. Send to [nsharpe@ualberta.ca](mailto:nsharpe@ualberta.ca)