



**Tuesday, April 28, 2009**

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## **York in the Media** NABU Network was an idea well ahead of its time

Though the NABU Network, the revolutionary brainchild of Ottawa entrepreneur John Kelly, ultimately failed, it is still recognized as a landmark event in Canadian technology, wrote the *Ottawa Citizen* April 25.

On Friday, it was celebrated enthusiastically by the York University Computer Museum at an event where Kelly was the guest speaker. Two York professors have spent several years rebuilding a version of NABU and demonstrated it to the public for the first time at the gathering.

“NABU was a revolutionary idea,” says **Zbigniew Stachniak**, professor in York’s Faculty of Science & Engineering and one of the people who rebuilt the network. “It was the first to conceive of the computer not only in the home but connecting to something outside the home.”

In a synopsis of Friday’s event at York, organizers described NABU as “the most innovative, daring and least appreciated venture” in Canadian computing and “an important forerunner of the Internet.”

### **York teaching staffs ratify settlement**

York University contract faculty and teaching assistants, whose strike forced the cancellation of classes for 85 days, ratified a mediated settlement with the University yesterday, wrote *The Globe and Mail* April 25.

The deal includes wage increases of 3 per cent a year, over three years, with other benefits.

The strike, one of the longest on a Canadian campus, was brought to an end in February with back-to-work legislation. Earlier this month, the two sides reached a negotiated settlement without arbitration.

- Students at York University can look forward to three years of education free of labour disputes today, wrote the *Toronto Star* April 25. All three units of CUPE 3903, representing the school’s contract faculty and teaching assistants, ratified three-year collective agreements last night.

The staff, legislated back to work in February after the three-month University strike, agreed to a wage increase of 3 per cent each year over the next 3 years, as well as an extended health benefits plan and improved dental benefits.

### **A bold new leaf for the Supreme Court?**

Just three years ago, the Supreme Court of Canada was seen as more conservative than at any point in its history, dismissing most claims from people who alleged their Charter rights had been breached and deferring to laws passed by Parliament, wrote the *Toronto Star* April 25.

Fairly or not, critics saw an institution kowtowing to accusations of judicial activism, a court working hard to show it wasn't undermining the will of elected MPs. But last year, the court re-emerged with what some are calling renewed confidence. In case after case, it stood up to police and other government institutions and drove "a large truck" through one of its own legal precedents, says **Patrick Monahan**, dean of York's Osgoode Hall Law School.

Monahan's analysis of the court's 10 Charter decisions from 2008, presented this month at a legal conference at York, shows it ruled against the government in 70 per cent of cases. Along the way, it overhauled an often-confusing legal test for deciding equality-rights claims.

"What we are seeing is a mature and confident court that is prepared to question legislative choices and to subject law-enforcement agencies such as the police to legal tests that are often complicated and indeterminate," Monahan says.

But not all Monahan's colleagues share that view. **Bruce Ryder**, who also teaches constitutional law at Osgoode, believes the court continues to take "a cautious approach" to Charter cases.

#### **To buy or not to buy...**

First-time homebuyers who choose to jump into the market now could see themselves carrying a hefty mortgage on a depreciating house, wrote the *Toronto Star* April 27 in a story about current real estate market trends. Anyone who bought a home when the market peaked in 1989 watched their "investment" plunge when the housing market tanked months later. Those homeowners still haven't recovered the pre-bust value of their homes two decades later, if you factor in inflation.

"There are so many myths around real estate," says **James McKellar**, director of the Real Property Development Program at the Schulich School of Business at York University. "Let's not forget that before the 1980s, the motto was that a home was a money pit. Over a long period of time, housing does not keep pace with inflation. Don't look at it as an investment. A house is a cost. You don't buy a car as a good investment – you buy because you need it."

"The conditions (for buying) are favourable in terms of interest rates and affordability, but that's just one concern," McKellar said. "The decision to buy depends on your personal circumstances – that includes your personal needs and how secure you are in your job situation. Ask yourself: is your ability (to pay down a mortgage) going to be the same in a few years time?"

#### **Department stores need better focus, says Schulich prof**

Canadian department stores like Eaton's and Simpson's had criss-crossing modern central escalators disgorging customers onto its floors, from the basement food hall to glamorous top floor restaurants overlooking it all, wrote

the *National Post* April 25. In between was a fully contained shopping world selling durable, dry goods to the carriage trade from diapers to death, with attentive personal service throughout.

“The reason department stores became popular is because you could go to this one store that suited the society of that time,” explains **Ajay Sirsi**, professor of marketing at the Schulich School of Business at York University. “Since then, what has happened is a proliferation of markets. Of media. Of distribution channels. And of customer needs. What the department stores have not done is that they have not come up with a compelling point of view that’s different. They could maybe try and focus on one or two areas that will drive people into the stores.”

### **The power of a good story**

Canadian author **Kim Echlin** (MA '77, PhD '82) has just released her third novel, *The Disappeared*, about a passionate affair between a Canadian and her Cambodian lover, set against the backdrop of Pol Pot’s killing fields, wrote BC’s *Vernon Morning Star* April 25. The book has sold in 16 countries, and Echlin believes it has taken off abroad because of its universal themes, such as the tension between the individual and the state. “I think that, as a world culture, we are still struggling with that tension, and there are few countries that don’t have their own secrets and buried bodies – Canada included.”

Born in Burlington, Ont., Echlin completed a doctoral thesis on Ojibwa storytelling at York University, and also studied in Paris at the Sorbonne and in Montreal at McGill University.

### **York grad works to clarify Western history of Native peoples**

“Indigenous ways of knowing are very sophisticated and they are worthy of feeling proud about,” says **Lynn Gehl**, a PhD candidate at Trent University who earned her BA from York University’s Faculty of Arts (BA Hons. '02), wrote the *North Bay Nugget* April 25. This course will serve to clarify Western historical knowledge, as there is such a misconception about Canada’s history. It begins with pre-contact and moves along right up to the contemporary land claim and self-government process.”

### **Member of cinematic family studied at York**

Greater Sudbury’s Adetuyi brothers are wrapping up a venture that would see films and TV shows shot, produced and driven by northern Ontario talent, wrote *The Sudbury Star* April 25.

In the 1970s, when Sudbury born **Robert Adetuyi** (BA Hons. '87), one of the brothers, graduated from Sudbury Secondary School and applied to the Department of Film in York University’s Faculty of Fine Arts, he couldn’t believe their response. “They saw my portfolio and immediately called a conference with me and said, ‘You know what? You really should just go to the third year because the work you did at Sudbury Secondary is so advanced’,” Robert said. “I mean, we did everything.”

### **Former Atkinson associate dean leads Ryerson’s Chang School**

**Gervan Fearon** is the new dean of The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University, wrote Jamaica’s *The Weekly*

*Gleaner* (Canadian edition).

Fearon joins Ryerson from the Atkinson Faculty of Liberal & Professional Studies at York University, where he was associate dean, academic. Outside his academic roles, Fearon is in his third year as president of Tropicana Community Services, a United Way agency that provides support to new immigrants.

#### On air

- **Bernie Wolf**, economics professor and director of the International MBA Program in the Schulich School of Business at York University, spoke about why Chrysler employees need not panic over US bankruptcy protection moves by the company, on AM800 Radio (Windsor) April 24 and on CTV Newsnet April 25.
- **Tom Romas** (BA Spec. Hons. '02, BEd '07), a graduate of York's Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education and a former York Lions basketball player, was interviewed on CP24's morning show April 24 at Scarborough's Sir Alexander Mackenzie Senior Public School.
- York student **Meegwun Fairbrother**, narrator for *Almighty Voice & His Wife*, a play directed by York theatre Professor **Michael Greyeyes**, spoke about the play on Aboriginal Peoples Television Network April 24.

