

Merit Award for Outstanding Service citation
Award recipient: Nia Phillips
Written by: Ann Baithwaite

Hi everyone,

It is my immense pleasure to read the citations for two of tonight's three service award winners: Keltie MacPhail and Nia Phillips. I had the great pleasure—along with Kim Mears and Bill Whelan—of nominating them both for an FA service award, back before the strike began. My admiration for their commitment and 'service' only continued to grow during the subsequent 4 weeks.

When asked if they would "help out" with the Job Action Committee back before Christmas, neither Nia nor Keltie—nor I—had any idea what that would mean (I can say the same thing about the work of all the people on the JAC)! To say that they both stepped up (and up and up) in ways that are above and beyond what could or should be expected is a total understatement! I could not be more appreciative or, frankly, relieved, at what they did for months before our recent strike, as well as throughout those 26 days. And while my following comments are specific to their contributions around our recent job action, we also all know that people this committed to something are always also active in many other arenas. Their 'service' is wide-ranging, and their contributions to constant community building in the FA and at UPEI are lengthy.

And now, some more about Nia Phillips.

Nia quickly volunteered to be part of what we came to call the "Comms Crew" last fall, diving into the work of producing the FA's wide-ranging social media presence. All of those memes and graphics, with their incredible mix of 'snark' and humour, and many each day (especially during the strike), were produced by Nia, who we jokingly came to call our "meme machine." It sounds flippant, but the necessity in this day and age of a strong social media presence cannot be underestimated. And Nia knows that, and was fabulous at it; I, you also no doubt, heard from many people in the broader community about how terrific our social media was throughout at translating a number of complex issues into visual soundbites (to mix my metaphors completely there). And we know how much so many people came to look specifically to our social media for information—although I don't know that we all 'get' what a responsibility it was to respond to that. The task of coming up with several new graphics day after day after day is not an easy one—and yet, there she was, doing precisely that. And the speed with which she responded to those communications from the employer or to requests for a particular kind of message: "I'm on it" she'd say right away, and then, seemingly minutes later, there was something new to post, complete also with 'alt text' descriptions to ensure greater accessibility for more people. I, many of us no doubt, came to both look for and depend on Nia's creativity and timeliness immensely; this would have been a very different and much diminished job action campaign without her contributions!

Nia – from me, from all of us – thank you!