

Pressure Point

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM CUPE 2081



Outgoing Chief Steward Office Coordinator Report

Hello all, I want to thank the Local for the opportunities they have provided me over the past 27 years. I started on the Executive in early 1988 while on probation working as an Audio Visual Clerk. Recruited by Val Mieras I went from being a part time employee as a Campus Representative, to Recording Secretary, to President of the Local and to finally in 1995 I took on the position of Chief Steward of the Local, a position I have enjoyed and sadly will be saying goodbye to.

Over the 27 years I have been afforded the opportunity to become educated and learn about the Union movement and to assist and represent our members. The Local has afforded me opportunities for which I am forever grateful. I'm proud to say that having been involved for so long, I have watched our local become one of the most well respected and highly profiled locals in BC and across Canada. I am proud to have worked with so many of you; you are all the reason people become activists. I hope that will continue.

I always said my loyalty was with the Local and that the Local has been my first priority. But that priority must change. In 27 years I have had the privilege of representing a good portion of our members in meetings with the Employer and or through labour negotiations. I have also worked with members one on one with their issues. Helping people was always first and foremost a goal for me. I hope I made the working conditions a little better for everyone even if in a small way.

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Over the past year we've seen a lot of changes and in particular the Executive. You have a lot of new faces and new ideas which will continue to guide you. My only recommendation is that you do not forget the history of this local and that you do not forget those who have contributed their time and efforts to the members, the College and the community. Take some time to pause and reflect on those achievements and individuals. One of the reasons this local thrives is its ability to give back to the communities in which we live and to support their fellow workers.

I am proud to have worked with so many of you; you are all the reason people become activists.

While I am still covering as a temporary CUPE Servicing Representative in Vancouver for an individual currently on sick leave; it is apparent that the Chief Steward/Office Coordinator position of the Local needs to be filled properly and by someone who is able to attend the meetings and represent the members. Someone who is visible and present. While I have been offering assistance from afar, it is clear that the Local needs to focus on filling the position with someone on an ongoing basis. I encourage the Chief Steward to utilize their Servicing Rep as much as possible. John is a great resource and mentor for all situations. So...I did not seek re-election this time and wish my successor all the best in their efforts.

Thank you to my husband Jerry for his support and guidance over the years. I look forward to hopefully seeing him a bit more in the near future. I thank you to everyone I

have worked with on the several past executives and over the years. It has been a pleasure. Tony, you are a great leader for the Local and I know you will continue to shine. Thank you for your support and encouragement while I sought to try out a new challenge.

In solidarity,
Louise Oetting
Outgoing Chief Steward/Office
Coordinator

Your opinion matters!

Please send via email, and make sure to include your pictures. Email submissions to: CUPE2081@camosun.bc.ca and thompsons@camosun.bc.ca.

Drop off written submissions at the CUPE 2081 office on the second floor of the Young Building, Lansdowne campus.

Special Thanks

This thank you is long overdue. About a year ago, I was involved with a bike/car accident, and it has been a really rocky road back to recovery....and not the good kind of rocky road with ice cream and cherries. But, with every turn of the road, I was very fortunate to have Dawn Svendsen and Shirley Wendland to watch my back (literally) and have shoulders to cry on (ok, someone stop me...enough with the bad analogies).

No, seriously, Dawn and Shirley were, if you can suffer through another analogy...my "rocks". It was a very difficult year for me, and they were there for me when I needed to know what union rights I had, and, equally as important, what rights I

didn't have in respect to my gradual return to work.

For their professionalism and compassion, I have no words. I am truly appreciative. Our union representatives are a very hard working, dedicated bunch. It can be a very difficult job for them, and they take it on with pride.

And, thank you too Tony Nelson. You were there too for me...except of course for the last few minutes of the Superbowl. Tony and I share a mutual passion for the 'Hawks, and my twin sister and I were fortunate (unfortunate?) to be at the game in Phoenix. And, I couldn't help thinking....if only Tony was in the huddle....maybe, maybe???, well, I guess they just didn't take his sage advice like I did.

Forever grateful, Sandy McClary

Spotted your name in 9 point Impact bold?
Email [CUPE2081@camosun.bc.ca!](mailto:CUPE2081@camosun.bc.ca)



Learning is like a Dandelion

Can you imagine that? Learning? Like a dandelion? Perhaps learning starts much like a wee puff of a dandelion seed innocently floating in the breeze, unknowingly coming ever closer to a permanent home.

The seed lands in a fertile substance and begins to grow. Soon, leaves can be seen, but the important

growing is happening underground, where it can't be seen. Its main root grows longer, bigger, deeper, all the while continually encouraging more roots to emerge, grow, and sprout their own smaller roots.

Above ground, stems and tight buds appear, reaching skyward, searching for sustenance. Eventually, blossoms burst forth in all their bright sunny yellow gloriousness, showing off all of the hard work done by the roots in the dark depths of earthly delights.

I have encountered a workplace oddity. I'm going to call it a vertical learning curve. The first odd thing is that it isn't a curve at all. It's dead straight.

The second is its verticality. I had thought it should merely rise on a gentle incline toward the far-off horizon, rather than be an unbending entity pointing skyward to the blackness of infinity and beyond.

Thirdly, the learning. After ten months, shouldn't the tip of that entity at least have started to fall back toward earth in some sort of horizon-seeking fashion?

“It's perfect. You've had a strong sense of fairness all your life, Dawn. You'll be fine.”

My visual representation, to anyone bothering to look, is simple. I slam my right elbow onto the hard surface of my desk, my upper arm ramrod straight up to the fingertips, as if I was preparing for a serious arm wrestling experience. This is my vertical learning curve. Ever had one?

I came to my role as your Acting Chief Shop Steward/Office Coordinator quite unexpectedly, quite honestly, and quite innocently. Truthfully, I had my doubts. Most of those doubts were about myself.

When I told my best friend of over forty years about the possibility of being in the role and expressed some of those self doubts, she just nodded, flashed that beautiful smile of hers, and matter-of-factly said, "It's perfect. You've had a strong sense of fairness all your life, Dawn. You'll be fine."

As is often the way between friends, she instinctively knew my strengths, and would always speak of them. I instinctively knew my challenges, and would always speak of them. Rarely did she speak of my challenges, and I, of my strengths. Ahh, this is how it is between great friends.

Remember those glorious bright sunny yellow dandelion blossoms? One day, those incredible blossoms magically develop into fuzzy globes of wee puffy seeds seeking a life of their own. There comes a day when the wind huffs and puffs with enough strength to force the seeds to drift off in search of a barren spot to root, grow and blossom. Is learning like a dandelion?

With unity,
Dawn Svendsen



Yearn to Learn

There is a plethora of excellent information out there in our world, just waiting for us to come and grab it. Again, as is often the case for me, I unexpectedly came across some excellent learning, when I attended...STOP! Yes! Your instincts are correct.

This is an education report, but I promise I will heavily disguise it as an entertaining, well crafted, informative learning experience...when I attended the Summer Institute for Union Women at the University of Victoria in July 2014. (Don't let the time lapse fool you into thinking I have been anything less than enthusiastic about writing this article!)

Proudly sporting my new word, I embraced the forthcoming days of learning with open arms filled with great anticipation.

Given the diversity among readers, this paragraph contains some of the expected traditional "niceties," which some readers may enjoy, while others may feel inclined to skip to the next paragraph. Irene Lanzinger, Secretary-Treasurer of the B.C. Federation of Labour, opened the Plenary Session and welcomed all of us, including participants from throughout Canada, Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, and Turkey. Yes, Turkey! She thanked the wonderful BC Fed staff members for their hard work, which enables such events to be successful.

Irene introduced NDP MLA's Carole James (Victoria-Beacon Hill) and Maureen Karagianis (Esquimalt-Royal Roads) to us. She ended with a reminder that we all sacrifice

something to be participants, even work, which usually awaits our return, and to "work on building that better world." Then, Kassandra Cordero, Director of Women's Programs at BC Fed, addressed housekeeping issues and logistics of the Summer Institute.

Our keynote speaker, Sikata Banerjee, Professor and Associate Dean of Humanities at UVic, specializes in the areas of gender and nationalism, and spoke extensively about "intersectionality." For readers (like me) unfamiliar with "intersectionalism," it may be described as the inseparable, tangled mess of two discriminations, which have collided in the middle of one of life's many intersections. I can offer myself as an example, based on my female gender and earlier years as a single parent. The two (some-time) discriminations are difficult to separate and each exacerbates the other. Among other things, my children are adults now, so being a single parent no longer seems to be of consequence. However, at the time, all those years ago, did I suffer consequences at the hands of society with its stigmas and stereotypes, merely because I was a woman raising two children by myself? You bet I did.

Proudly sporting my new word, I embraced the forthcoming days of learning with open arms filled with great anticipation. My Core Course was "Women in Leadership 2." Having never taken the first level of such a course, I was flattered to have been placed at its second level. Turns out the first level was full (a good thing!); so much for flattery! Our expert instructor was Chantel O'Neill from the Canadian Labour Congress, and Debra Kidney from

the U.S.A. was our generalist. We had the good fortune to have some of the Turkish contingent in our class. They had travelled to our city to learn about union structures for the workplace. The remainder of our group was a 50/50 split between American and Canadian participants.

I must admit, I was surprised that my course focussed on "campaigning," be it campaigning for public office, union executive, or some other elected position. During the week, we explored the basics, advanced skills, and other important factors, of campaigning. For example, what office are you running for and why, have you delivered a speech in front of an office, and what skeletons are in your closet? I received several helpful handouts, including: planning a campaign, targeting, pros and cons of various contact methods, how to formulate your message, types of speeches (love this one!), answering the tough questions, do's and don'ts, etc. Here's a tidbit for you. The golden rule of all campaigns is:

**You need to send
the right message
to the right people
at the right time
for many times
in many ways
at the best cost!**

Have you ever heard a worker described as "precarious?" During one of my Short Workshops, I attended a presentation by Erie Maestro, Migrante BC, about "Temporary Foreign Workers." Such workers are within the category of "precarious workers," which includes workers

Rebecca Taylor

with employment that is less than the full-time, continuous, one-employer work they desire. Our federal Temporary Foreign Workers program provides a foreign worker with a restricted work permit for up to four years, and then the worker must leave Canada for four years. Usually, the work is menial, poorly paid, and without benefits. Currently, women fill the majority of these jobs. Most workers come from the Philippines, followed by Mexico, then India. Unfortunately, many such workers are abused in a wide variety of ways. You may wish to view a documentary called, "The End of Immigration," which we watched in the workshop, to understand some of those abuses. You may be appalled, and you may be better informed. (Migrante BC is a community based organization for Filipinos in British Columbia.)

On a lighter note, a creative sign making workshop generated as much childlike fun as one might find in a kindergarten class. Shane Prasad and Nadia Santoro shared helpful do's and don'ts, when making signs for rallies and other events. Signs were made for use at the Stroller Brigade at the Parliament Buildings on Saturday afternoon, before the last day of the Summer Institute.

The Summer Institute for Union Women is an annual educational opportunity hosted by the B.C. Federation of Labour. The 2014 Core Courses included Women in Leadership, Collective Bargaining, Organizing, Public Speaking and Keeping Order in the Political House, and Combatting Bullying in the Workplace. Short Workshops were Temporary Foreign Workers/Guest Workers, Progressive Orga-

nizing, Free Trade Effects on Women, Self Care, Aboriginal Relations, Media, and Women's Contemporary History. In addition to Sign Making, Inspiring Others Through Telling Your Story, Creative Resistance, and Activism Through Song, were available for exploration of one's creativity. If you would like to review any of the course materials, the print copy is in our office and an electronic copy is on our office drive.

With unity, Dawn Svendsen
January 2015



Dear CUPE 2081,

Thank you so much for the wonderful retirement gift! I am thoroughly enjoying my new iPad!

But even more than that, I want to thank my Union for supporting me for 35 years. I've heard many people say what a great place Camosun is to work, and I agree. CUPE 2081 can take much credit for that.

Over the years we have bargained decent wages and important benefits, including vacation and holidays, staff development funding, and approved leave for personal and family illness.

By providing shop stewards and representatives on important committees such as labour/management, health and safety and job

evaluation, the Union has contributed to a culture of respect that many workplaces do not enjoy.

Personally, I know that my involvement with the Union helped build my own self-confidence. I learned to think for myself, and to advocate for others. I was given the chance to develop new skills in public speaking and report-writing, learned how to chair a meeting and was exposed to progressive ideas that never seem to be covered by mainstream media.

Post-secondary education is more important than ever, and CUPE 2081 members should be extremely proud of the work they do every day to support our students. I know I am. I can look back on 35 years and know that along the way I was able to make a difference to people's lives, and that's a great feeling!

Keep up the work, and continue to care for each other!

In solidarity,
Val Mieras (retired)

Got cool CUPE photos?
Email them to
thompson@camosun.bc.ca

Cover: Day of Mourning

Keith Todd (left) and Tony Nelson (right) at the April 28 Day of Mourning, Lansdowne campus.

In 2014, 203 workers died in BC. On April 28, 2015, CUPE 2081 and the Victoria Labour Council stood in solidarity with workers across Canada to honour the dead and fight for the safety of the living. The gathering was at the Lansdowne campus of Camosun College.
Photo: Ida Colantonio



Val Mieras and Ed Nicholas relaxing by the pool. Date & location unknown.

35 years in CUPE 2081

So much has changed since I became a member of CUPE 2081 in September 1980. The Local had just settled a new contract, after being out on strike for a few weeks in August, picketing around the clock to delay construction of the new Fisher building.

...then I found myself on the bargaining team...

I was originally hired as a term employee in the Printshop, making \$8/hour. Back then all Terms were paid Step A of Pay Grade 2, regardless of the position (there was no Pay Grade 1). Within a few months I was made permanent and got an immediate pay increase to Pay Grade 4, which was the pay rate for the job I'd been doing all along. In the spring of 1981 I was asked to run for Chief Shop Steward. I asked what it entailed and was assured it wouldn't be too much, but I might have to meet with a member over

lunch every once in a while. We only had about 150 members, and it's true...the workload was not too bad!

And then I found myself on the bargaining team, and in the midst of negotiations the Union sent me to CUPE week-long school in Naramata to take the Collective Bargaining course. I learned a lot that week. For instance...that we should have taken the proposals to the membership for approval before bargaining started. Who knew?

At that time there was no Human Resources department and the College's bargaining team was chaired by the Bursar/Director of Finance. We sat across from the Men in Suits on our own...our CUPE National Representative didn't participate in bargaining back then. I don't remember too many details, but I do remember being very adamant about changing the practice of discriminatory pay for Term employees.

After a couple years as Chief Steward, I was elected President, a position I held for 8 years in total. I sat in on several bargaining sessions and too many Labour-Management meetings to count. New buildings were built, new programs were introduced, campuses were consolidated, our membership grew and technology changed. Computers replaced typewriters and new skills had to be learned every time a new software program or process was introduced.

...it was through CUPE bargaining that we achieved our extra Christmas holiday...

I recall fighting for improvements to our Staff Development Fund. We could apply to have Camosun courses funded, but not courses from UVic. While debating the merits of expanding the funding eligibility, I recall the VP Student Services asking why we cared about it, because very few CUPE members would want a university degree anyway. When I listed off several people who did, in fact, already have a degree, he was quite surprised.

And it was through CUPE bargaining that we achieved our extra Christmas holiday. The Premier of the day, Bill Vander Zalm, brought in provincial wage controls, but unlike today when the government controls all "cost items", we were prevented from discussing a wage increase, but benefits were still on the table. The first year we got one extra day off, with the timing to be at the discretion of the College. The next round of bargaining we asked for the other two days to give us the full Christmas-New Year's week as paid holidays. The big sticking

point with the College was the Student Services workload at that time of year when all the Fall exam marks had to be entered and winter registrations had to be processed. I can't remember who finally came up with the solution, but somebody suggested delaying the start of the winter semester by a week, and we had a deal!

With 35 years of memories, I could go on and on, but I'll stop there. Things have changed a lot, and they will continue to change, and that's a good thing. But what doesn't change is the Union's relevance. It's as important today as it was in 1980 and all those years in between.

In solidarity,
Val Mieras

Nowrooz on campus

As the Spring Equinox was approaching, Naji Khodashenas approached the child care staff asking if he and his wife Hoda could prepare a lunch feast for the educators as a thank you and in celebration of the Persian New Year (Nowrooz). Of course, we were delighted and excited to say 'yes'!

This prompted us to do some asking and investigating around Nowrooz and we embraced the opportunity to do some learning with the children.

We did some spring cleaning or Khouneh Tekouni (which means 'shaking the house'), washing our toys and outside houses with soap and water.

We set up an Haft Sin 'altar' of sorts, with the Seven 'S' items that are traditional to the celebration.

The Haft Sin items are: Sabzeh (wheat sprouts – symbolize re-birth), Samanu (sweet pudding – symbolizes wealth, Senjed (dried fruit from oleaster tree – symbolizes tolerance), Sir (garlic – symbolizes health), Sib (apples – symbolize beauty and love), Somaq (sumac berries – symbolize patience) and Serkeh (vinegar – symbolizes development and evolution). Some other items that we put up were some Easter eggs, a mirror, gold coins, a poetry book, two goldfish and a hyacinth flower. The children named them Portegaal (orange) and Maahi (fish).

The staff loved the delicious beef stew, tuna salad, rice etc that Hoda prepared, and another family with Persian roots made kebabs and Persian rice for the children on the actual New Year.

We are just so lucky to have such a sharing and caring community!
-Chivonne Graff



Election report from the 52nd Annual CUPE BC Convention

CUPE BC holds annual conventions, every second year there are elections which highlight the convention. Brothers Mark Hancock and Paul Faro were acclaimed to the positions of President and Secretary Treasurer respectively;

these are the two full-time officers that CUPE BC has. The election of GVP (General Vice-President) had six well-qualified candidates put their names forward for the four GVP positions. The successful candidates who will represent all of BC are Trevor Davis from the Vancouver Island District Council, Cindy McQueen and Karen Ranellata both from Metro District Council and John Hall from the Kootney District Council.

It should be noted that Karen and Trevor were both from the Young Workers program which CUPE BC started 15 years ago. CUPE BC realized that we needed a strong succession plan and the qualities of these candidates have proven that.

District Councils elect RVP (Regional Vice-Presidents) at their respective caucuses RVP represent the areas from which they are elected. Vancouver Island District Council which also includes the Gulf Islands and Powell River elected Michelle Waite from North Island College and Amber Leonard from the Sooke School District as well we elect an alternate and that is Allison Pringle from the School District of Gold River.

There was one Trustee elected to a three year term the successful candidate is Jose van Berkel. She hails from the Penticton School District. CUPE BC has three Trustees and one is elected every convention.

CUPE 2081 wishes all the best to the successful candidates and to those that put their name forward!

In solidarity,
Keith Todd

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