

**EXECUTIVE REPORT – ROSEANNE HARVEY, COMMUNICATIONS
OFFICER**

Dispatch from the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) 2019 Conference, Winnipeg, MB, June 6 – 8, 2019

First of all, I'd like to thank CUPE Local 2081 for the opportunity to attend this conference. It was a chance to meet labour communicators and activists from across the country, and to sharpen my communications skills with a labour lens.

The CALM Conference was three days of workshops and sessions focused on communicating with labour membership and with the general public about labour issues. The other attendees seemed to be mostly from public and private sector unions and employee advocacy groups (interestingly, I didn't happen meet any other CUPE members). I attended a day-long "advanced communicators" workshop on taking portrait photos, as well as the two full days of conference programming.

Here are my three takeaways from the conference:

- 1) *The CUPE Local 2081 website can be a portal to member engagement* – in a surprisingly informative and dynamic workshop on union websites, I learned a framework for creating a "ladder of engagement" on our website and how to think about the website from the members' perspective. Rather than just a receptacle for information, the website can convey the Local 2081 story and convince members that their efforts will affect change.
- 2) *"Gaslighting" in the workplace and how to identify when it's happening* – gaslighting, "a form of psychological manipulation in which a person seeks to sow seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or in members of a targeted group, making them question their own memory, perception, and sanity," [via [Wikipedia](#)] is a very on-trend concept. It's also a common tactic in politics and in the workplace to assert control and keep people in a position of subordination.
- 3) *Labour plays a role in facilitating hard conversations in our workplaces and our communities* – this was a common thread in several of the sessions I attended, whether talking about labour journalism as a political organizing tool or how to make union events and campaigns more accessible. The presenters all had stories about how they challenged themselves to get out of their comfort zone and push for change.

Of course, one of the greatest takeaways was chatting with other delegates over shared meals and learning that we're all in this together. We're all figuring it out as we go, struggling with

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disengaged membership bases, and managing our union duties on top of full-time work and full lives. It's heartening and inspiring to connect with other union activists and share stories.

The conference was intentionally held in Winnipeg in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the [1919 Winnipeg General Strike](#), a key moment in Canadian labour history when 25,000 public employees walked off their jobs and effectively shut down the city for weeks. During one of the few blocks of free time during the conference, I snuck out to an exhibit on the strike at the Manitoba Museum to learn more about its impact and repercussions.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to learn and expand my skillset at the 2019 CALM Conference. I'm grateful to the CUPE Local 2081 membership and to the CALM organizers for making this event happen.

Roseanne Harvey
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