

## **CUPE BC 2022 CONVENTION EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

*“Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.” – Marian Wright Edelman*

The pandemic has been a difficult time for our membership across B.C., and we want to commend all of you for your dedication to the Union movement and to educating your members for this most critical work.

Some members have worked throughout the pandemic, some were laid off and others lost their jobs. Being at home gave us time to reflect, at times be anxious, to be curious and, where necessary, to seek clarification.

Education certainly helped to find some of the comforting information we were looking for. It also gave many a good outlet to improve their skills while they were at home and/or had the flexibility with the approval from their Locals to take advantage of the Education Calendar, which was expanded and offered hundreds of workshops over the past year, including new BC-specific workshops for Legal and Equity issues.

All the District Councils continued their advocacy for and through education. The Education department has been there every step of the way, to ensure members received the education they needed.

### **CUPE Metro District Council**

As the pandemic continued and it became obvious that in-person learning opportunities were not likely to come back for a long time, our locals needed to become more creative, accessing both the newly created OLS series courses being offered by CUPE National and other sources.

This concept was much easier for our larger locals with greater resources. CUPE Local 15, along with accessing CUPE’s OLS “Introduction to Stewarding” and “Notetaking” modules, conducted training for their stewards, grievance committee and executive on grievance analysis and decision (whether to advance grievances to the next step). They also put on a workshop on Combatting White Supremacy.

CUPE Local 389 has concentrated on educating newly elected executive members and stewards on the specifics of their local, covering history, structure, and roles.

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CUPE Local 728, along with engaging in available CUPE OLS modules, has accessed OH&S courses from the BCFED and has had members participate in a course on making your workplace psychologically healthy through another provider.

CUPE Local 1004 has been conducting monthly Steward training sessions and has covered most of the current OLS modules currently available.

CUPE Local 7000 has been using the OLS modules as much as possible, along with Local Specific Education for their stewards, grievance committee and executive members.

Other locals have endeavored to utilize OLS modules when resources were available.

For 2022, CUPE Metro Vancouver District Council will be looking into sponsoring locals that do not have the financial resources to participate in currently available union education.

### **Okanagan & Mainline District Council (OMDC)**

With the introduction of online education courses, our locals can enroll their members with ease. These 3-hour courses have seen a dramatic increase in the number of participants. Unfortunately, what we are seeing now is Zoom fatigue.

OMDC has been busy over the past year, endeavoring to get guest speakers to join our meetings. A few of our requests were for a presentation on “End the Blood Ban”, and a blanket ceremony, that had to be canceled because of COVID restrictions.

Looking forward, we are hoping to have a presentation in person, on Truth and Reconciliation. As mental health is a huge issue and growing larger every day, we are looking to have a presentation on mental health/health and wellness.

Going forward, we will be working closely with our Communication Committee, so we can bring forward social and equity issues as part of our Education Committee.

2021 was hard on all of us, but as 2022 begins, we are optimistic that this year we will be able to resume, at least in part, our normal lives.

### **CUPE Local 900**

Just like everyone else, we are very happy that 2021 is over, and we look forward to a new year of meeting and joining together face-to-face. CUPE Local 900 has a very active education committee, and although we were not able to provide the in-person courses our members wanted, we were able to provide 27 of our members with union education on a variety of topics.

We thank the CUPE National BC Region - Education Department for their commitment to the courses that were put out on the virtual platform of Zoom. Going forward into 2022, we are very appreciative that the courses are now posted a few months in advance, since as a local we have had some difficulty getting leave time for our members, due to the short notice.

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Each year, CUPE Local 900 grants 4 education bursaries of \$1000.00 each to our members or their families. 2021 saw a new bursary of \$500.00 awarded to a current working member. This bursary was in honor of Bill Ferguson, and his legacy of more than 60 years of service. Bill was instrumental in forming local 900, bringing together a large geographical area. We were very proud to offer this bursary out to our members, and going forward into 2022, Local 900 is again going to be offering to our working members two \$500.00 bursaries for continuing education.

### **Kootenay District Council (KDC)**

Just as the KDC created their two-year plan to roll out a comprehensive goal to provide educational workshops for all our locals, the pandemic came in and everything was put on pause.

Only in October 2021 were we able to start booking online workshops. We asked our Locals what they needed, and we brought in half day modules starting with the Bargaining workshops for the morning sessions, wrapping up the day with a workshop from the Steward Learning Series.

We're excited to move to in-person education and membership meetings come this May.

### **Northern Area District Council (NADC)**

Over the past 2 years, the NADC has had to cancel both their Spring and Fall schools.

This past fall in October, we were able to offer a virtual format of Spring School, with courses being offered by CUPE Facilitators over 3 full days, offering a large variety that allowed locals to register far more participants than they would have been able to if the school had been held in person.

For every school, the NADC offers 3 travel grants that are given to locals based on the luck of a draw, to use for travel expenses to attend the fair. This year, the Executive made the decision to split the scholarships amongst those locals from their area that sent members to the courses.

Of the 26 affiliated locals in the NADC, 10 locals sent members to the fall virtual school and were sent a portion of the 3 travel grants to cover the book off time needed for members to attend.

CUPE Local 4653, Peace River North, was able to send our entire Executive and all of our Shop Stewards to these sessions. We found this extremely useful, as at our last elections in June most of the Executive and Shop Stewards were new to their position. This training was very useful, as things started to ramp up in our District due to COVID-19 related illnesses. We have been able to use this training to represent members in meetings with management, discuss reconciliation within our Executive, and work towards using this information to become a more aware and understanding group.

While we were in the sessions, we found that there were quite a few attendees from other areas of the province, as there were spaces available and CUPE was able to open the NADC

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school to other locals from outside of our area. The large number that I spoke with were very happy to be able to attend these courses, as their areas were not able to offer courses in a similar format for their members to attend.

Although we found it really useful to be able to send our entire Executive to the virtual training, many of the first-time attendees felt that they were not able to retain enough information to feel comfortable in their new position. They are really looking forward to hopefully being able to attend courses and schools in person in the coming months. We hope that there is opportunity for a hybrid form of learning in the future, where courses are offered both in person and online, so that all will be able to attend.

### **Vancouver Island District Council (VIDC)**

The island has been a hub of busyness, trying to get all their locals ready for bargaining. Many workshops were facilitated across the Island to prepare CUPE locals with bargaining experience.

Some areas on the Island set up their own monthly educational calendar and hosted workshops beneficial to community Locals.

CUPE Local 2081, Camosun College, negotiated language for Staff Development and Training as well as a newly negotiated Letter of Agreement for a Service Improvement Fund.

### Training and Development and Staff Development Fund

If our members are requested by our Employer to take courses, they are released from work at the Employer's expense for the duration of the course/examination period, and all costs are covered by the department/College.

Courses cover a wide swath of training and development, conference, and convention opportunities but vary in access from department to department based on services provided. Some activities are fully funded by the College, while others are cost-shared with the Staff Development Fund.

If a member wants to pursue self-interested studies or recreation, our Staff Development Fund reimburses costs for tuition, conferences, travel, books and at times equipment up to \$2,000 per fiscal year, \$500 of which can be used for recreation: classes, recreation passes, painting, cooking etc. This is a shared benefit and, prior to COVID-19, saw high usage. CUPE Local 2081 has great autonomy of choice in what is covered and when activities are approved from the Staff Development Fund. While the fund is jointly managed by Local 2081 and our Employer, it is not a traditional professional development fund.

### Service Improvement Fund

This is jointly managed, and limits were set at bargaining via an LOA: activities must directly correlate to service improvements for students. It was agreed the fund can be accessed for but is not limited to Indigenous cultural competencies, mental health and crisis management, accommodations and abilities training, communication and conflict resolution, and applicable union training facilitated by a union if such training meets the language of the LOA.

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Currently, we have offered a workshop on mental health and LGBTQI Inclusion, and hope to bring a workshop on Indigenous Conflict Resolution techniques, as well as keynote speakers on various other topics.

COVID has created difficulties in providing opportunities, but we are actively seeking to build greater capacity and creative opportunities.

### **Fraser Valley District Council (FVDC)**

Many municipal locals in the Valley were in the midst of bargaining and received the necessary support when needed.

As things heated up, the training of stewards was of paramount importance. They become your messenger in the workplace and at this time you need that communicator more than ever.

### **CUPE National Education Department**

One of the good things that can happen, is that out of the ashes, a phoenix can emerge. In the past year, Education has experienced that, like nowhere else in CUPE.

The first thing is that my colleague Greg Burkitt retired, after decades of service to CUPE National; we wish him well in his new chapter. My new partner is Tina Meadows, who started with us in May 2021. I know you will warmly welcome Tina, who takes over Greg's territory, namely Vancouver Island, The North and the Okanagan. Tina will also be responsible for the Spring School. I still have the Metro, Fraser Valley and Kootenay areas, and am responsible for the Fall School. We are working together as a team on many things, especially with this new reality of a hybrid program. Our team includes our amazing support staff, currently Rachel and Darlene, who are instrumental to the success of our program. We want to express our thanks to them and the previous support staff Sophia and Mark.

Although it was difficult for us to get accustomed at first to everything being part of a virtual platform, by trial and error we all got there.

Within the Education Department, we needed to shift very quickly when we noticed this pandemic was here to stay for awhile. More workshops required developing as Education was catching on and the need was great. We also agreed that with all the work that was done on the development of the workshops and training of Staff and Member Facilitators, that this hybrid model is here to stay. We want to thank our amazing Member Facilitator who stepped up and took on the Zoom world of facilitation; without you, this would not be possible. Thank you also to staff who have taken the training to assist with facilitating in this virtual world – your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Many locals and members who would normally not be able to travel or participate due to child/eldercare, shift work, small local, distant travel – what ever the barrier was, it has been removed.

Just to show the shift in where we are:

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January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 – March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021: although 277 workshops were scheduled, which included Face to Face workshops, 177 of those workshops were held virtually. They were predominantly Introduction to Stewarding Level 1 & 2; Challenging Racism; LET – Secretary Treasurer; LET – Trustee Orientation; LET – Virtual Membership Meetings; BARG – Preparing for Bargaining & BARG – Strike Preparation. All these modules are 3 hours in length.

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 – March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022: 501 workshops were run, all virtual. These were virtual workshops added to our repertoire: BARG – Mobilizing for Bargaining; BARG - Preparing for Bargaining; BARG – Roleplay; BARG – Team Building; BARG – Strategic Planning; SLS – Conflict Skills for Union Activists; SLS -Duty of Fair Representation; HS – Introduction to Health & Safety Level 1 & 2; Intro to Allyship; LET – Conflict Ready Executives; LET – Leading as a Team; SLS – Notetaking.

What will it mean when everything resumes again? Education requests will come in through the regular 'Educational request form', which can be found on the CUPE BC website, under the "Education" tab at the bottom of the page. For any request, we require 4-6 weeks notice for the book-offs of our Member Facilitators or for staff to shift their schedules and any necessary printing and shipping that would be required.

Both Tina and I are working through how the new hybrid program will work, as we look at the increased volume in workshops. We know that a lot of members prefer in-person sessions over the virtual, but for convenience, accessibility, and availability, many will continue to gravitate to virtually presented workshops.

Currently we schedule Mobilizing "Mondays", Local Executive "Tuesdays", and Workshop "Wednesdays". This calendar is posted and scheduled until June. We will have a light summer offering but will be back with both face to face and virtual offerings from August to December. CUPE Education will continue to bring you challenging and thought-provoking workshops, with new and exciting things coming. UE is working closely with our Human Rights Department, as well as Sarah Cibart, and have been able to offer advocacy training for 2SLGBTQI+ which will continue and include part 2, currently in progress. The Executive of the NADC, at their weeklong school in October, had a new education offering, presented by our Legal Representatives (Martina Boyd & Natasha Morley). A virtual session was provided by UE on legal matters of grievance/arbitration and COVID, which was an excellent addition to the executive meeting. This workshop will soon be an addition to the BC-specific workshops, available going forward. We are also working with the Equity committees to develop and explore new offerings for CUPE members.

We have had an opportunity to advocate for Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training when members said it was vital for their wellbeing to get that in the lineup. Mental Health First Aid is provided by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, so we decided to bring them in to do these workshops. This workshop has an additional cost of \$75 or \$275 per person (depending on CUPE or MHC facilitators). Members can not only use the skills they acquire towards themselves and their family, but also towards their work, local and Health & Safety committees.

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In the future, we will be looking at other training opportunities that will benefit the members and provide additional education opportunities that we are confident the members of CUPE would like to explore. We want to thank the Division, who continues to be a champion for Education, and to you, the members who step up to learn and share to make the lives of working CUPE members better.

## Upcoming Key Dates

Spring School: May 29<sup>th</sup> – June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022  
Coast Kamloops Hotel & Convention Centre, Kamloops BC

Fall School: October 30<sup>th</sup> – November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Coast Nanaimo Hotel & Nanaimo Convention Centre, Nanaimo BC

Scholarships:  
Stay tuned in for CUPE BC's new Scholarship's for the Spring, Fall & CLC Winter School.

## Respectfully Submitted:

Anita Early, Chair	CUPE Local 748
José Van Berkel, Co-Chair	CUPE Local 3500
Darlene Foley, Recording Secretary	CUPE Local 900
Lily Bachand	CUPE Local 4951
Kamaljeet Bindra	CUPE Local 4951
Aaron Brandon	CUPE Local 403
Stephen Burns	CUPE Local 873
Jennie Copeland	CUPE Local 4653
Dennis Donnelly	CUPE Local 1004
Deborah Hopper	CUPE Local 1858
Erynne Grant	CUPE Local 2081
Caroline Parker	CUPE Local 3742
Lisset Peckham	CUPE Local 703
Vanessa Wolff, Staff Advisor	
Pearly Kheriwal, Administrative Assistant	

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