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A big welcome to Barb Byers

"I'm thrilled about having the literacy file," says Barb Byers, the new CLC officer responsible for literacy. "There's an excitement about union literacy work that's infectious ... the people who get involved are highly committed to the empowerment of workers. Sadly, this work often goes unrecognized." *"Imagine how much more dynamic our movement could be if our members could understand the rights they have won"*



Before being elected Executive Vice-President at the CLC Convention in June 2002, Barb was President of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) since 1988. She was a social worker and President of the Saskatchewan Government Employees Union from 1984 to 1988.

At the SFL, Barb initiated the WEST (Workers Education for Skills Training) Program in 1989. Through WEST, co-workers are trained as course leaders who instruct literacy and basic skills training in their workplaces. Barb is also a champion of clear language, and pioneered the option of submitting convention resolutions in a clear language format.

"Imagine how much more dynamic our movement could be if our members could understand the rights they have won through their collective agreements-if they felt empowered to own their organizations," says Byers.

In addition to Literacy, Barb has responsibility for Education and Campaigns, Labour College, Apprenticeship, Training and Technology, Health Care, Union Label and the International Labour Organization (ILO) .

Apprendre ensemble est publié trois fois l'an grâce à l'aide financière du Secrétariat national de l'alphabétisation. Nous vous invitons à soumettre des articles, des annonces sur vos activités et des textes d'opinions.



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Peer Learning Guide mode launched in Lunenburg

They're sometimes called "co-worker instructors", "course leaders" or "peer tutors". They are facilitators who are members of the same union as those participating in literacy programs. Now, the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour (NSFL) has coined a new term to describe the idea of learning between equals, of workers instructing workers through workplace education - the *peer learning guide*.

The term came from a federation working group put together to develop a Nova Scotia approach to union-based literacy. The group met in Lunenburg July 14-17, 2002 to come up with a plan to add peer learning guides in the classroom. The idea was to strengthen the role of unions in workplace education.

Participants at the NSFL Lunenburg meeting.



To develop this approach, the federation linked with unions actively involved in literacy, negotiating partnership agreements with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP). Each union agreed to:

1. help develop the Peer Learning Guide model
2. identify a workplace as a pilot site
3. provide learning resources to programs.

The unions also agreed to attend a meeting to establish a working relationship with the provincial Department of Education and to take part in the NSFL Literacy Institute in 2003.

The Department of Education has a strong program of Workplace Education, with a network of Skills Development Co-ordinators across the province. The NSFL believes that adding Peer Learning Guides, who would be certified by the NSFL and the Department, will help strengthen the union's role in the classroom.

The Lunenburg meeting was an historic event. It brought together resource people with hands-on experience with sister models in Ontario and B.C., national and local union representatives, and Department of Education staff. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) sent delegates to the meeting as observers .

Anchors away!

Did we launch the Bluenose III? A plan to develop the model is set to sail: a committee will develop the train-the-trainer course, and CEP and CUPE will identify pilot sites. A timetable has been put together that includes 80 hours of training for each peer learning guide, with ongoing support and opportunities for further training.

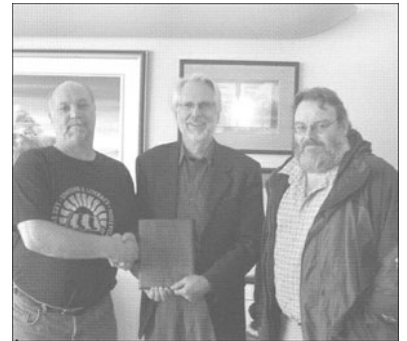
The federation plans to expand this project over the next several years. It is hoped that other unions will choose to partner around this model of union-based literacy and adapt it to their needs.

-Linda Wentzel, Co-ordinator, Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

Taking the prize for clear language

Bob Haywood, Northern Territories Federation of Labour (NTFL) President (right), and Steve Petersen, NTFL Literacy Co-ordinator (left), receive an award in Yellowknife in June for the federation's literacy work.

The federation has made a significant contribution to the Workers Compensation Board in the area of clear language. Presenting the award is Education, Culture and Employment Minister, Jake Ootes. With funding from the National Literacy Secretariat for its *Leadership and Literacy* project, the federation is planning a literacy forum in Yellowknife and a campaign to communicate the benefits of workplace literacy to unions.



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Quebec's new direction on adult education

In May, 2002, the government of Quebec adopted an Action Plan for Adult Education, Continuing Education and Training. The plan reflects the high level of consensus which has grown out of an extensive consultation process.

The policy recognizes the need for diverse ways and means of providing education and training to meet the needs of adults. It lays out the priorities for action around four main themes:

To ensure that all adults have access to basic skills training:

The goal is to significantly raise the level of basic skills within the population, with a priority on literacy and getting a first diploma.

To maintain and raise the skill levels of adults:

Lifelong learning linked to employment is at the heart of this policy.

To recognize prior learning and skills:

Three assumptions underline the direction of how prior learning and skills will be recognized. A person:

- has the right to have prior learning and skills formally recognized when evidence is provided
- does not have to repeat formal training for skills that have been acquired elsewhere or by other means
- does not have to seek recognition of prior learning and skills already assessed and approved by an official system (such as a school program or workplace skills standards).

Important steps will be taken to increase access to training and address training shortfalls.

To remove obstacles to accessing and completing training:

In all aspects of policy, efforts will have to be made to improve access to services and to support completion of training.

Several areas of training with connections to social partners are already in place to ensure the success of the Action Plan.

Louise Miller, FTQ



New videos

Literacy and Life Long Learning: The CEP Experience (also available in French as *La formation de base, on s'en jase*), a new video from the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP). 19 minutes. Participants, family members, instructors, local union officers, literacy activists and employers from a variety of workplaces across Canada discuss their experiences with learning essential skills for a changing world. \$5. Contact: CEP, 440 - 1077 St. George St., Moncton, NB, E1E 4C9. E-mail: ithom@cep.ca. Telephone (506) 852-9229.

Literacy is a Union Issue, a new video from the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL). 15 minutes. Designed for viewing at local union meetings, the video shows how literacy is about much more than reading and writing. With testimonials from workers in various kinds of workplaces and union programs across Alberta. \$10. Contact: AFL, 350, 10451 - 170 St., Edmonton, AB, T5P 4T2. E-mail: afl@telusplanet.net. Telephone (780) 483-3021.

Upcoming courses

Clear Language for Union Communications

- Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) / CLC School, Jasper, AB, Nov. 25-30, 2002. (Subsidies available.) Contact the AFL at (780) 483-3021.
- CLC Pacific Winter School, Harrison Hot Springs, BC, Feb. 9-14, 2003. (Some subsidies available.) Contact the CLC at (416) 441-3710.
- CLC Ontario Winter School, North Bay, ON, Feb. 23-28, 2003. (Some subsidies available). Contact the CLC at (416) 441-3710.

Union-based Literacy

- CLC Ontario Winter School, North Bay, ON, Feb. 23-28, 2003. (Some subsidies available). Contact the CLC at (416) 441-3710.

Integrating Lifelong Learning into Union Development: A networking and professional development course for union staff involved in worker education and training.

- CLC Ontario Winter School, Port Elgin ON, Feb. 9-14, 2003. Contact: Anna Larsen, Labour Education Centre, (416) 537-6532 ext. 2204, alarsen@laboureducation.org

CUPE makes literacy inroads

When it comes to literacy, Ed Thomas is one of CUPE's real success stories. He is a graduate of a literacy program in his workplace, a health and safety activist and the author of three books.

"I can't say enough about the benefits of participating in the literacy program," says Ed, a tractor driver with the City of Hamilton's Parks Department. As a member of the executive of CUPE Local 5167, Ed plans to use his experience and knowledge to help set up a new literacy program in his workplace this fall, so his co-workers can benefit from the kind of learning he was involved in 14 years ago.



"People are open to the seeds we are trying to plant."

With allies like Ed, CUPE's National Literacy Project Coordinator, Sylvia Sioufi, finds her work a whole lot easier. The project, *Making Literacy a Union Issue*, was launched more than two years ago with funding from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS). Ever since then, the project has been bringing people together within Canada's largest public sector union to talk about literacy.

"People are open to the seeds we are trying to plant," says Sylvia. "Tech change, restructuring and contracting out in our workplaces have made people aware of the need for training, for upgrading. And clear language is just common sense for all of our locals, and for the national union."

A recipe for success

At CUPE Local 500 at the City of Winnipeg, Kathy Todd is finding ways to help workers get past any negative associations they might have with the term "literacy." "We talk about brushing up on math or reading," says Kathy.

Todd's approach seems to be a recipe for success. This fall, Local 500's Essential Skills Program has about 150 members signed up for five different classes, triple the number who graduated from the first program in 2001.

"My first taste of what this was all about was at CUPE's national literacy conference in January, 2001," says Kathy, who works in the City's Water and Waste Department. "It was heartwarming to hear the speeches from learners, and the workshops were so informative."

When she returned to Winnipeg, Kathy wrote a proposal to set up an essential skills program. The joint union-management Education, Training and Staff Development Committee provided \$150,000 for a 3-year program, open to all members of Local 500. Kathy is a Local table officer. She chairs the 6-person, union-only sub-committee that runs the literacy program.

"We're hoping to have more CUPE locals in all sectors across the country bargain and develop literacy programs like the one at Local 500," says Sylvia Sioufi. "Awareness and education are the keys to implementing these kinds of programs."

"Awareness and education are the keys to implementing these kinds of programs:"

Raising awareness means talking to people about literacy. During the last 18 months, Sylvia and other CUPE literacy activists have spoken to CUPE members at four Division conventions and other CUPE events. She has also delivered workshops on union-based literacy and clear language in Alberta and Nova Scotia.

In Saskatchewan, a needs assessment will begin this fall with a group of CUPE members in waterworks facilities. The workers are slated to undergo mandatory certification, and "the union wants to make sure that this change doesn't happen at the expense of members," says Gail Lasiuk a Literacy activist and national reference group member. That is why Gail is working with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and other CUPE activists on a proposal to build essential skills programs into the training plan for mandatory certification.

Education allies

CUPE's education staff across the country are some of the CUPE Literacy Project's biggest allies. Josey Finley, the Alberta CUPE education rep, helped the Alberta Federation of Labour produce a video about workplace education, putting the director in touch with CUPE members in two municipalities and one school board. Nova Scotia education rep Gloria Murphy is working with the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour and other unions. They're developing a program to train union mentors to help their co-workers participating in workplace education programs.

"There is no question that literacy is a union issue," says Judy Darcy, CUPE's National President. "It is becoming clear that as CUPE moves forward with literacy, we are also empowering our members to stand up for women's wages, to fight privatization, to fight for better collective agreements, and to fight to protect our rights."

The CLC Literacy Working Group

The CLC Literacy Working Group is composed of affiliates and federation representatives with an interest in union-based literacy and clear language, The Working Group meets twice yearly to share information and resources, learn from our collective experiences and advise the CLC on its Workplace Literacy Project Contact your Literacy Working Group representative for more information about what's going on in your organization.

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