

JUNE
2020



THE MEMBERS' VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF CUPE LOCAL 15, VANCOUVER MUNICIPAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY WORKERS
We are on the unceded Coast Salish Territories of the x̱w̱məθkwəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)

Please note!

The union office continues to be open to essential staff only and closed to members, executive, and other visitors. Union business is being conducted by telephone, email, video conferencing, or conference calls.

Office telephone hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.



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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The possibility of holding a virtual General Membership meeting in June is being investigated. If a meeting will take place you will be notified via email if the union office has a personal email address on file for you. Details will also be posted at www.cupe15.org. If you do not receive emails from the union office please call us at 604-879-4671 to update your information or email us at email@cupel5.org.



Systemic State Violence and Anti Black Racism

by Warren Williams, President

As President of CUPE Local 15 I have thought about addressing the fear, violence, and anger since the murder of George Floyd. I am tired of stating the obvious when it's not my voice that should be heard. I didn't create the racist attitudes that my family has fought against all our lives. Six hundred years of history created this moment. Of course we are angry and I challenge anyone to deny us that anger.

We should all be angry that we continue to condone the oppression of generation after generation of a people; a people that have done nothing except give of themselves over and over again, generation after generation.

I am still willing to work and am hopeful for change but the reality is that it is not my work so why be surprised or shocked or dismayed when a reckoning comes? What has been done to avoid it other than oppress the very people you should stand up for?

There is a huge amount of misplaced guilt out there. It's hard not to feel guilty if you were raised with certain values that all people deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, compassion, and understanding. If these are values you were raised with then where is your voice? How can any of us continue to see a people oppressed by another simply because of the colour of skin? When you are a member of the oppressors, even though you believe you are not racist, by standing by, turning a blind eye, and having no voice, you are condoning the oppression.

I know many of you will read this and feel attacked, which is why at the beginning of this I said it is not my voice that needs to be heard, it is yours.

Only when you demand and fight for change will change come. After 600 years it's obvious to me that it's not my voice that needs to be heard.

ELECTION RESULTS ARE IN

In the initial poll of the 2020 Executive Board elections Aaron Cook was elected as Trustee, Kamal Gautam was elected as City Sector Representative, Alex Fowler was elected as College/University Sector Representative, and Cynthia Schadt was elected as the K-12 Sector Representative. All positions are for three year terms.

At the time the Members' Voice went to print a run-off ballot for the Secretary-Treasurer and Parks Sector Representative positions was underway. By the time you read this the poll

will have closed and the results will be posted at www.cupe15.org.

Upon closing of the nomination process Santino Scardillo was acclaimed as 1st Vice President, and Mia Nickel was acclaimed as the HSPBA Sector Representative.

Thank you to all the members who participated in online voting. This election had the highest voter turnout since our first electronic election in 2013.

Return undeliverable
Canadian addresses to:
CUPE Local 15
545 W. 10th Ave.
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 1K9



Thank you, stay safe and have a great summer!

by Warren Williams, President



WARREN WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

By the time you receive this edition of the Members' Voice our Executive Board elections will be completed. I would like to thank the candidates for letting their names stand and welcome the newly elected candidates to the Executive. An

Executive orientation session will be scheduled as soon as is feasibly possible.

Thank you to our outgoing Executive Board members for their service to the local. I know most of you will continue to be active participants in servicing our membership and I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Once again thank you to all members of CUPE Local 15 and your families for all you do to service the citizens of Vancouver, particularly during this time of COVID-19. I know it has not been easy and has required life style changes for all of us.

I am happy to say our members at Emily Carr University have ratified a new collective agreement and I would like to extend a big thank you to the bargaining committee for their dedication to the members of ECU.

The Langara College Bargaining Committee is working hard and has been meeting regularly with the employer and hope to have an agreement in place by the time you receive this or shortly thereafter.

With the disruption created by this pandemic it has been difficult for the CUPE 15 staff and Executive to conduct business as usual. I am happy to say that we have been able to continue representing the interests of our membership due in large part the total commitment of all of our staff who have, through virtual meetings and conference calls, been able to work with our stewards on members' concerns along with many meetings with all of our 17 employers to address concerns and come to resolution. Where we have issues of violations to collective agreement language, grievances have and will continue to be filed.

We have an agreement with the City of Vancouver to get back to the bargaining table and will be meeting with our bargaining committee to set dates to continue with collective bargaining.

Currently, we are in discussions with the Vancouver Art Gallery because of substantial revenue loss due to the Gallery's closure as a result COVID-19. By the time you receive this we hope to have come to a Letter of Understanding that will keep our members working.

I am a member of the Vancouver Art Gallery and would ask that if you are not a member please become one if you are able in order to support our members who work there and support all this institution provides to people here at home and abroad. The gallery will reopen with restrictions on June 15, 2020 and I encourage you to make it a family outing.

Have a great summer, be safe, continue to follow the physical distancing protocols, and remember this will pass with our collective continued vigilance.

Now for something different from the Secretary Treasurer; her story...

by Sally Bankiner, Secretary-Treasurer



SALLY BANKINER
SECRETARY-TREASURER

She was 24 when she started working for the Health Department in 1984. To her it's a lifetime ago. The Health Department was under the City of Vancouver and it was a menial job by some people's standards but to her, it was a "foot in the door"

and that's what mattered. After being on social assistance for three months, anything would do. She had \$325 to live on per month and that covered her rent. She was grateful her amazing father bought food and paid for her bus fare and a phone line so she could continue her job hunt. Finally it paid off. Her mom and dad always said "work for a company that has a pension". She thought, "pension?, I'll work for anyone right now". "You will be grateful! Mark my words!"

She did just that and called a woman named Lorna at the City of Vancouver Human Resources Department every day for a month asking if there was any work – anything at all would be just fine! Finally, after over a month of pestering poor Lorna, to her surprise she said, "yes, this time I do, but it's not much of a job.

It's temporary reception work at the main office of the Health Department and it's in Vancouver and you're in Langley". The 24 year old said immediately - "not to worry, I'll get there so I'll take it". She would show up the next day at 8:00 a.m. and look like a receptionist was supposed to look in those days, wearing a skirt and blouse! She immediately called her family and they were overjoyed her persistence had finally paid off. There were not a lot of jobs in the early 1980s as most employers were going through massive layoffs, which is why she lost her job to begin with in 1982. Not to worry, she had a job now even if it was a temporary assignment, and she was going to be the best employee they had ever seen!

It was a great job. Getting to meet important people in the City like Dr. Blatherwick, Dr. Peck, and Judith Bezeredi (all whom she will never forget) was interesting and so were the mundane tasks she was assigned. She did her utmost to be helpful to everyone and treat everyone with the kindness, respect, and courtesy she learned growing up. After a few months, her position was posted and she applied for the job and was the successful candidate and didn't have to worry anymore about the looming deadline. She started looking for interesting jobs she could apply for that would be challenging for her and saw a job in a department called Social Planning and thought that may be a good start. It was a reception job too but it was much better than being without work. She met some fantastic people she will never forget like Rick Gates,

Max Beck, Chris Warren, Eunice Mak, Sandy James, Brian Newson, Joan Karasz and of course, Kim. Unfortunately, while it was really interesting, there must be more to working for the City than answering phones and being a receptionist. It was interesting to see how the City awards grants for different community organizations and supports the arts in the City. She continued her hunt for the perfect job.

She wanted something that she really enjoyed and challenged her spirit and one day she found it! Stanley Park Zoo Clerk, WOW that sounded perfect! A clerical job in a beautiful setting with lots of animals. Perfect – she had found her dream job! She loved feeding the animals and got very close to many of them and the polar bears in particular, Lady and Tuck really fascinated her. She would often spend hours on her own captivated by every move and found out everything she could about them. Where they came from, how long had they been at the zoo? Why did they get sent to the zoo when they were six months old? What happened to their mom? Why the heck are they yellow? She loved those bears and had great respect for their enormous strength and power.

She loved working with all the zookeepers and feeding the penguins and deer and running along the bison fence in the early morning to make them run and feel the ground shake. The train rides through the upper zoo were always fun and she loved training the cashiers. The Children's Zoo was where her interest in exotic species took off and she took home many

exotics to care for like boa constrictors which she named Bow Tie and Spock along with numerous fire belly toads and other creepy crawlies. She even saved two tiny bunnies from becoming breakfast for a snake, a black and a white one who she bottle fed on her desk for a month and named them Polar and Bear respectively. Those were the good old days!

Then the unthinkable happened. She was given notice that her job was coming to an end and she was being laid off. The zoo was going to be phased out! What now? One of the staff at the zoo was involved in the union and they told her not to worry and that the union could find her another job through something called "bumping" which didn't sound very pleasant at the time. She quickly started to apply for all kinds of jobs whether she had all the skills or not. She needed a job, any job, and couldn't go through unemployment again.

After about a month, she saw a posting that interested and peaked her curiosity. It was in a new facility the City was opening up called the Gathering Place. They needed someone to be a clerk. Hmmm, I could do that! Yes, another clerical job but that's okay she thought. It may not be a perfect fit but then no bumping thing. When she applied and went through the interview it seemed to go perfectly. She was more than qualified. She was shocked when she got the call that she didn't get the job and later found out that they already had someone in the job and didn't want to lose her to a newbie. The Director called her back a few minutes later and said she thought she had something "different" for her and it could be a perfect fit! Well, miracles do happen! Diane MacKenzie had a job setting up the Health Centre area where, as she explained it, older people and young kids on the streets would be able to come take a shower and wash their clothes. Hmm, why does this McKenzie think that is a perfect fit for me? Was there something about me? Maybe because I worked in the Health Department for a bit? Was it because I looked young and impressionable and would just do what I was told and not be too much trouble? Well, Diane had another thing coming!

That began the next nine years of a career that lasted for 36. That position was one of the most life altering and rewarding things she had ever done. The friendships she made, the people's lives she touched and those who touched hers inspired her to begin a path of helping others first. If you take care of others, you will be taken care of too when you need it and least expect it. That began an interest in Health and Safety. She got involved in their worksite Health and Safety Committee and when she continued to speak up at the committee meeting on behalf of her co-workers, she had the pleasure of receiving the "evil eye" and a strongly worded hand written (in red) letter from the Director, Diane MacKenzie saying that "she" was not the committee and suggesting that she keep her mouth shut at those meetings! Well, that was the first moment of real change for her, she was going full throttle.

It was those incredible relationships she was able to build with the street kids and homeless that came to her for help year after year. Sometimes beaten to a pulp and/or covered in blood from being attacked the night before, having their belongings stolen. It brought tears to her eyes many times but also gave her great satisfaction to buy a kid a meal in the cafeteria or find them a new set of jeans to wear as she cleaned their wounds and listened to their heartbreaking stories. Often the kid just needed someone to tell their story to that wouldn't judge them for what they had to do to survive after leaving home at 13 years old.

The staff, kids, and adults that work and volunteer hundreds of hours every year to keep that facility afloat is no short of a miracle and angels work there. Take what you need when you need it, and give back from your heart with a few hours of hard work when you can. No one ever went hungry leaving the Gathering Place.

It was truly an amazing experience until one day a gentleman by the name of Donald Bowser was murdered and things changed for her overnight. It set off a chain reaction that couldn't be stopped. Such grief this woman had never felt before. It was all consuming and devastating to the core. Donald was a middle aged man, he was a local teacher, he constantly wore a yellow Walkman. Donald loved to live on the streets in the summer. He had a home, he had money, he had a family, but chose to live on the streets so that he never forgot or took for granted the things he had. He was truly an intriguing man to talk to. Like clockwork, at 10:00 a.m. he came into the Gathering Place Health Centre for a shower and breakfast until one day he didn't show up. She came to work that day to find a "wanted" poster in the elevator with his photo dead centre. "Wanted", "Information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the murder of Donald Bowser" emblazoned on the front. That was her breaking point.

She spent several months on a leave and after she returned to work, she applied for a job in Engineering which she was successful in getting. It was working with the street vendors and business owners that had produce and flower displays on City property. Not her dream job but definitely a great job and team of people there to support her. But things change at work; one day you have a great boss and/or supervisor, tons of friends, seemingly you are all friends and then wham, things change overnight. The reason? She decided with her co-worker to do something about the porn in their pool City vehicle. The whole group used the van so they spoke to their supervisor who told the whole work group that "she" had laid a sexual harassment charge against all of them, which was absolutely false. They had only asked that the porn magazines be removed from the vehicle as it was their workplace as well. Just take it out of the City vehicle, that was it.

From that day forward they went through horrible targeted bullying and mobbing. It got so bad there were people urinating in the

decisions

The Executive decided

At their virtual meeting on May 19, 2020 the Executive Board made the following decisions:

- To extend Noel Graves as Temporary Staff Representative I until May 22, 2020.
- To deny a request from a shop steward to remove staff and the sector chief shop steward from a case.
- To hold a virtual General Membership meeting on May 27, 2020.
- To confirm Donna Petersen as the Returning Officer for the 2020 Executive elections.

The Members decided

Our first virtual General Membership Meeting was held on May 27, 2020 using the Webex platform. Participants were able to vote on motions such as approving the agenda, approving the minutes from the last membership meeting (February 2020), receiving the financial statement, and a motion to adjourn.

There were no notices of motion to vote on and the chair asked that motions not be submitted from the floor at this particular meeting. Discussions are underway to expand meeting participation at future virtual membership meetings.

VSB JOB SHARE OPPORTUNITY

Looking for a job share position - either a 0.5 or 0.6 FTE (preferably starting September). Please contact Nina Russo at 778-889-7670 or ninarusso@hotmail.com.

plants in her office and physically stopping her from exiting. She went to her union for help and became a shop steward. She had signed up to be a steward taking the course right away and was going to learn everything possible so if this happened to other people, she could now help them. She had found her niche!

For several years she continued on in Engineering as a Street Use Inspector, in the Produce and Flowers Program as the department shuffled people in the department around, never with an explanation but that didn't matter as she was happy serving the



The Members' Voice is published nine times a year for members of CUPE Local 15 - Vancouver Municipal, Education and Community Workers. The deadline for submissions is 9:00 a.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. All submissions may be edited for brevity and clarity. Signed articles and letters do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of CUPE Local 15.

CUPE Local 15

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Local 15 is a chartered affiliate of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and is also affiliated with the CUPE British Columbia Division, CUPE Metro District Council, the Vancouver & District Labour Council, and the BC Federation of Labour. CUPE 15 is a member of the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM).

CUPE Local 15 Executive Board Table Officers:

President: Warren Williams
Secretary-Treasurer: – electronic poll underway at the time of printing
1st Vice President: Santino Scardillo
2nd Vice President: Gaye Fowler

Sector Representatives:

City: Kamal Gautam, Ravina Lal
College/University: Alex Fowler, Rose Palozzi
Cultural: Noel Graves
Health/HSSCBA: Allison Bell
Health/HSPBA: Mia Nickel
Parks: Kyle Larson, Starla Bayley
K-12: Carley Romas, Cynthia Schadt

Trustees:

Donna Petersen, Michele Alexander, Aaron Cook

Staff Representatives:

Kathie Currie, John Geppert, Steve Salsman, Gail Johnson, Joy Tullos

Office & Administrative Staff:

Mark Gloumeau, Accounting Coordinator
Rosemary Matheson, Office Manager
Barbara Simpson, Office Assistant
Nadia Thibault, Office Assistant
Nancy Strider, Accounting Assistant
Tia Tang, Office Assistant

Building Service Worker:

Elaine Duan

CUPE National Representatives:

Chris Losito, Patrick Barbosa

The CUPE Local 15 office is very old and unfortunately not accessible. For our members with mobility challenges please note that the office is on the 3rd floor and there is no elevator. If you are attending an appointment or meeting with one of our staff, please contact them in advance to make alternate arrangements for the meeting place or call the Secretary-Treasurer at 604-879-4671.

We sincerely apologize and want you to know we are working very hard to rectify the accessibility issues with our building.

members she represented as a steward. She went on to run for a more political office with her union and around 2007 she became the City Sector Representative for a term and then 2nd Vice President for about eight years, and has had the pleasure of serving as your Secretary-Treasurer since November 2015.

Being your Secretary-Treasurer has been one of the best experiences of my life. I truly loved getting to know members at worksite meet and greets, organizing our events every year from the Children's Christmas and Winter Party, the Union's Annual Open House, International Women's Day Dinner, organizing and cooking chili for the hundreds at the annual Chili Cook-off for the City of Vancouver, the May Family Day celebrations with our bouncy castle at Manitoba Works Yard, with kids by the hundreds lining up for a go. I enjoyed the annual Members' Barbeque at Trout Lake, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives dinners and representing Local 15 at all of these events for the past 14 years.

One of my favorite things was having the privilege of conducting the training sessions for hundreds of new stewards over the past five years. New stewards are like sponges and just soak up everything. I truly enjoyed every minute of building our Local's activists. Thank COVID-19 for kyboshing our last three training sessions where we had 65 new stewards signed up.

The highlight I believe and what I was most proud of was having the privilege of organizing our 100th Anniversary Celebration in 2018. We had 500 guests celebrate 100 years as a union and brought our activists from all over Canada together again. It was a night to remember those we lost and celebrate those who came before us and look forward to the future and the next 100 years. I will remember that night for the rest of my days and hope all of you will carry fond memories as well.

As I move towards the next chapter of my life, I will never forget all of the amazing people I have met along the way, those people I have been able to help with issues around their employment or complicated medical accommodations or those who lost their job as a result of an employer error or a simple payroll keypunch error being corrected so someone received their pay cheque in time to pay their mortgage. I will miss all the strong and amazing activists I have met and mentored over the

many years I have been a City employee and union steward.

I will truly miss our remarkable union office staff; Rosemary, Maureen, Barbara, Nadia, Tia, our accounting staff Mark and Nancy whom I have worked so closely with in the past five years, and those incredible warrior activists to the bone who personally mentored me as a new steward like John Geppert and Steve Salsman. I will miss our Staff Representatives who I've worked every day with who come from our ranks with true activism in their bones like Gail Johnson and Joy Tullos, and those who have worked elsewhere prior to coming to us like Kathie Currie, and those who have retired or just moved on like Wendy Bice, Sally Stukus, Keith Graham, Steve Baker, Graeme Moore, and Kevin Tilley. All of you have shaped me and made me into the person I am today and I thank you for your graciousness, and especially John Geppert and Steve Salsman for your patience.

The members are the true heroes of my story, as without you, there would be no union. I am grateful my mom and dad encouraged me to work for a company that had a pension and I am grateful it was a unionized workplace. If I could teach you anything, it would be to stand firm and stand up strong for doing what is right all of the time, no matter if you are not popular and make some enemies along the way, you will always be able to hold your head up high and know that the members believed in you because they know who you are at the core.

Build your reputation on doing what is right, not on what will score brownie points! Treat everyone equally and don't play favourites or do certain people favours because they ask you to or think that you owe them something. Be fair and treat others with fairness and make it on your own merit. No, it's not easy sometimes. Sometimes it is incredibly hard to fight the fight and go full throttle against the bullies and their friends but know that if you persist, you will always come out on top because you have your dignity and self-respect and didn't sell out to or for anyone, no matter who they were or what title they possessed.

As I leave you all after a long 36 year career, I wish your health and happiness. I wish you a long life and hope that my story may inspire you to get involved in any way in your union. We are all "the Union" and we all need you!

IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19,

WHETHER YOU'RE ON THE FRONTLINES

OR DELIVERING VITAL PUBLIC SERVICES

OR AT HOME FLATTENING THE CURVE

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER