

VOLUME 48 NUMBER 1

Winter 2021

PERSPECTIVE MAGAZINE

A photograph of a person in a dark uniform mopping a large, highly reflective floor in a spacious room with large windows. A yellow mop bucket on wheels is nearby. The scene is brightly lit, and the floor reflects the light and the person.

Cleaners in Postal Facilities: Side by Side on the Front Line

Our struggle for Bee-Clean members

**CUPW IS PROUD TO SHARE ITS LATEST DOCUMENTARY
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MEMORY AND MUSCLE**



Justice & Dignity for All

Stories From the Struggle for Pay Equity

**DEBORAH
BOURQUE**

**SUE
EYBEL**

**KAREN
LEE**

**ALICE
BOUDREAU**

**NANCY
BEAUCHAMP**

**CYNTHIA
PATTERSON**

AND WITH: SYLVIE PEDNEAULT, SOPHIE GRENIER, VERONICA LINTON, JANET RUSSELL, RAMONA SORBUN,
KARLA GUERRA, PEARL GILLIS PALMER, LYNN KEEFE, KIM VANSICKLE, GLORIA PEW

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THE FILM



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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Perspective is your national newspaper, with a mission to connect, inform, and mobilize members.

Communication is a two-way street!

We want to hear your stories and concerns – what do you have to say to the rest of the CUPW membership? You can submit your letters to the editor, opinion pieces, feature ideas and other thoughts to feedback@cupw-sttp.org or to CUPW Perspective, 377 Bank Street, Ottawa ON, K2P 1Y3.



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CUPW Perspective welcomes letters to the editor. We will print any letters from a CUPW member provided it:

- is 400 words or less. Union members may submit longer items for consideration as commentary pieces.
- does not violate CUPW policy opposing discrimination and harassment against women, people of colour, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender individuals, people with different abilities, and/or CUPW policies and principles.

- is typed or written neatly.
- includes the author's name, address, local and a phone number where they can be reached if there are problems.

Perspective will withhold the author's name if necessary. Otherwise, the author's name and local will appear.

Perspective will contact authors if there are problems with their letters.

We accept letters by mail, fax and electronic mail.

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A Message from your President

2020 was a bizarre year. We were faced with a global pandemic, and had to adapt to an ever-changing “new normal.” Through it all, postal workers and private sector bargaining unit members continued to go to work, keeping our economy running and people safe. Last year changed how we relate to our family, friends, and co-workers, but it did not change CUPW’s commitment to ensuring that workers are treated justly and fairly.

2021 will not be an easy year. There are many challenges ahead and it will take determination and commitment, willingness to learn and change, as well as hope and a sense of humour, to get through the next year. CUPW leaders at the national, regional, and local levels cannot do this alone. We need the collective strength of the Union.

Here is a brief look at what’s in store at CUPW this year:

Bargaining with Canada Post

The Urban collective agreement expires in early 2022, while the RSMC agreement expires in late 2021. We know that imposed collective agreements cannot meet the needs of workers. An arbitrator, regardless of their skills and ability, cannot fashion collective agreements that resolve workplace problems.

This year, we will develop bargaining demands, talk to our members about the need for negotiated collective agreements, and find ways to pressure Canada Post.

This spring, we will be holding wage and contract conferences to create bargaining demands and to discuss how to best prepare ourselves for successful negotiations. The more prepared we are, the better off we will be.

Bargaining with our Private Sector Bargaining Units

CUPW bargains year-round for our PSBU members, and this year will be no different. Our PSBU sisters, brothers, and friends are fighting for some of the same rights Urban and RSMCs fought for in the past. Courier contracts shouldn’t be given to the lowest bidders and unionized workers shouldn’t have to settle for lower wages because an employer takes advantage of a flawed system. We know that an injury to one is an injury to all, so I encourage all members to support their private sector coworkers.

Green, sustainable post office that meets the needs of all people

COVID-19 has shown how important a universal public postal service is. The work of postal workers is invaluable to keeping our economy going, and we know there are ways to improve and expand our services.

The *Developing Community Power* campaign will continue to evolve and grow to meet the needs of our communities. Postal banking is crucial to the economic recovery of so many rural and remote communities, and greening the Canada Post vehicle fleet will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. CUPW will continue to work with allies to bring you the post office of the future, today.

Organize the unorganized – especially in the gig economy.

In 2020, CUPW won a precedent-setting victory when the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that Foodora couriers had the right to unionize but our work isn't over. As long as employers refuse to treat workers with respect and fairness, CUPW will continue to organize.

Preparing for a possible Federal Election

If a federal election is called this year, as many suspect, CUPW will be prepared to fight and protect our rights. The outcome of a federal election will impact Canada Post and CUPW. It was a previous Conservative government that tried to permanently stop door-to-door mail delivery, and numerous federal governments have stripped us of our collective bargaining rights and passed back-to-work legislation.

Protecting our Pensions

CUPW members who work for Canada Post have Defined Benefit Pensions, the most secure type of pensions. Pensions are not a gift from the employer – they are our deferred wages.

In Canada and across the world, Defined Benefit Pensions are under attack. CUPW worked hard with our allies to stop Bill C-27, which would have allowed Canada Post to substantially weaken our pensions.

The threat is not over. The Federal Department of Finance has launched a consultation on potential short-term solvency pension funding relief options for 2021 and longer-term measures to further strengthen the framework for federally regulated pension plans. We know some governments and employers will use this as a forum to weaken our Defined Benefit Pensions.

Pensions provide us with a secure retirement, give us dignity, and keep our communities vibrant. In 2021 and beyond, we need to be vigilant to protect our pensions.

Participating in the labour and social justice movements

There is strength in numbers, which is why we encourage all members to attend local labour council meetings and talk to other unionists about our issues. Most of us want the same rights and share the same values, and these collaborations turn into action on picket lines and in demonstrations.

This spring and summer, CUPW will be participating in the Canadian Labour Congress Convention. We will also continue to support and participate in numerous social justice issues. We not only want to build better workplaces, but equal and safe communities.

Improving our health and safety

Far too many CUPW members are getting hurt and injured at work. The impacts of injuries are felt in all facets of life, at home and at work. We have worked hard to build safe workplaces for all members, but this work is never-ending. We will continue to expend our time, effort, and energy to making sure that no one is hurt or injured at work.

Education

Education makes us stronger. Our numerous Union education courses teach us about our rights and how to fight back against injustice, how to become social stewards, and represent members during hearings or meetings with the employer. The continued COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way our educationals are offered, but CUPW has pivoted, and in 2021, more of our courses will be conducted.

Fighting against racism and other forms of oppressions

Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, colonization, or any form of oppression weakens us all. They divide us and make it harder for people to speak up and participate. Last year, the Black Lives Matter movement was reenergized by the continued murder of unarmed black men by police. The conversation about systemic racism and all other forms of oppression must be ongoing. We must carry this work into this new year.

2021 is not going to be an easy year. But, by working together we can make gains and be strong.

I look forward to working with all of you.



Jan Simpson

National President's Meeting

Understanding our Collective Agreements and Preparing for the Future

In late November 2020, members of the National, Regional, and Local executive committees from across the country, gathered for the National President's Meeting. The meeting is held after collective agreements are ratified to review the changes, answer questions, and discuss the Union's strategy for the implementation and enforcement of the new provisions.

A meeting of this magnitude takes months of preparation and a committed group. This year, we were also faced with a never-before seen challenge: COVID-19. The pandemic made it impossible for the over 300 participants to meet in person as is the normal practice. The organizers had to pivot quickly and move the meeting online.

Despite this challenge, the virtual meeting was a great success, with informative presentations, plenty of time for Q&As, and chairing from National President Jan Simpson. Presenters took the time to answer

questions and to break down the changes in tangible, easy to understand ways.

The hours of practice meetings were evident as issues were minimal, and when they did arise, they were addressed quickly and efficiently. Nothing can replace the benefit of face to face communication, but the smooth running of the President's Meeting online has shown us that we can successfully adapt.

The meeting was a success in part because the members were so engaged. It's easy to lose focus in virtual meetings, but over the weekend, members remained willing to learn, initiated thoughtful conversations, asked important questions, and requested more detailed information. They were eager to have the necessary information to better represent the members of their regions and Locals. After the meeting ended, many asked for more information and even offered suggestions for future meetings.

Covid-19

Changing the way we meet

Graphics and videos were used to create an immersive experience for participants.

The use of colours and images that represent CUPW and our members help create a visual story and some dynamic breaks to the meeting.

The President's meeting came at an interesting time, as CUPW will be returning to the bargaining table with Canada Post in less than a year. Therefore, as people discussed the recent changes to the Urban and RSMC collective agreements, they did so knowing that the Union will be formulating a new set of demands for the upcoming round of bargaining.

As has been the case during the last few contract negotiations, CUPW expects a tough round of bargaining. The Corporation will be ruthless. They will talk about losses and threats to the Corporation to justify their long list of rollbacks. This talk has already begun.

Our answer is clear and strong: We will not accept concessions. We will not agree with any reductions in services to the public. And we demand that management address our issues

We must stand together, be united in our fight and not let Canada Post pit us against the other. We must remember who our fight is with.





PRIDE AND

INTERSECTIONALITY

A COMPLEX UNION OF CELEBRATION AND RESISTANCE

CUPW – Child Care Fund

We've Come A Long Way, Baby

The history of women in the postal service has been a long struggle for equality. Today, women represent more than 37 per cent of CUPW's membership at Canada Post, but let us look back at how we got here.

The Early Days

In 1964, letter carrier Norah Stackard was fired after a day and a half of work because of her gender. At the time, a spokesperson for the Postmaster General said that the job was reserved for men, and would remain that way until the Civil Service Commission and the post office completed its study of the feasibility of employing women letter carriers.

By 1965, women were permitted to work for the post office, but few did. Of the 23,644 full-time employees in the post office, 619 were women – only three percent. In 1967, CUPW organized part-time workers, who were mostly women, which helped increase the percentage of women in the union to 20 percent by 1970.

By the 1970s, more women were being hired as letter carriers, especially in communities where men had better-paying job options. With increasing numbers of women members, CUPW began to hear more and more about the need to make child care a priority. It became part of the debate on women's issues at the 1980 National Convention.

Maternity Leave and Child Care

In 1981, CUPW struck for paid maternity leave. At the time, the only other workers with negotiated paid maternity leave were the Common Front of public sector workers in Québec. The CUPW strike rallied women's groups, and brought national attention to the issue. After a 42-day strike, maternity leave became part of our Urban collective agreement, paving the way for radical change across the country. Today, half of the collective agreements in Canada include some form of paid maternity leave.

Child care policies were adopted in the National Constitution in 1983 and included opposing cutbacks and for-profit child care, and support for 24-hour a day universal child care services as a government responsibility. These policies continue to guide our work and our CUPW Child Care Fund.

CUPW also chose to take direct action on child care in bargaining, to support our existing members with their needs, while also doing our mandated advocacy work toward childcare for all workers.

Between 1984 and 1987, CUPW began putting child care on the bargaining agenda. In 1987, CUPW put forward a demand for employer-paid child care services, and through this, won a joint child care study. The study was compelling — it told the story about the stresses and strains workers face in trying to balance work and family, and led to a jointly administered child care fund (set out in appendix L of the Urban Postal Operations Collective Agreement) with a yearly contribution of \$800,000 from Canada Post in 1991.

CUPW Child Care Fund

The Fund's early days were an exercise in frustration. After 25 meetings with Canada Post to develop projects to meet the child care needs of members, not one was developed. The Union decided this was intolerable, and in 1995 negotiated full control of the Fund with Canada Post making its annual contribution.

Since assuming administration of the Child Care Fund, CUPW has moved ahead on a number of direct child care projects (one in each of the CUPW Regions). Our two largest projects – the Special Needs Project, and Moving On, support members who have children with disabilities. The Fund also undertakes critical policy research on child care and related services. The fund also supports a national coordinator who oversees the programs and develops new ones to respond to member needs.

Child Care: Pushing Women out of the Workforce

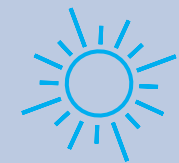
Despite our efforts, it's clear that lack of child care is still one of major barriers preventing women from entering and growing in the workforce. A 2017 study by Catalyst, a non-profit that aims to create workplaces that work for women, found that women were twice as likely (26%) to work part-time than men (13%). Among women, 27 percent listed childcare as a reason for working part-time.

Child care systems and services were hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Some centres and home-based services shut down, others have fewer spaces, and the crisis has worsened the need for a reliable, healthy, safe universal system. Fortunately, CUPW is in a position to help many of its members get over the child care services gaps thanks to our negotiated fund and the programs it sustains.

Whether it's good paid jobs, a secured pension, maternity leave, affordable and quality child care, and a workplace free of harassment, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers will continue to be at the forefront for justice and gender equality.

Children and care givers adapting to the COVID-19 guidelines





Fighting to Win Expanded Services

DELIVERING COMMUNITY POWER STRIVES TO BETTER OUR WORK AND OUR WORLD

When CUPW launched its *Delivering Community Power* campaign in 2016, we shared big ideas to change not only the post office, but the world. It turns out, we weren't the only ones ready for change. Our ideas attracted thousands of new supporters and helped us form terrific alliances with social justice groups, like the David Suzuki Foundation who acknowledged the work of CUPW and thanked the membership in a personal video.

We also engaged with all levels of government, and one of our big ideas – postal banking – was debated in the House of Commons. While the original motion failed, it created a conversation that is ongoing. Canada Post recently announced its commitment to develop community hubs and financial services, and last Fall's Speech from the Throne alluded to the Government's alignment with some of our vision.

We had momentum and we knew we needed to keep pushing.

The Next Phase

This next phase of the campaign is a multi-faceted undertaking that began in the Summer of 2020. It includes revamping the software needed for the campaign's promotion, webinars to keep members informed and excited about the campaign, the appointment of new coordinators across the country by the National Executive Board, and creating a bigger presence in traditional and social media.

It also includes a new name: "**Fighting to Win Expanded Services**" was born out of CUPW's desire to connect *Delivering Community Power* more significantly to our jobs and working condition.

Our ideas reflect not only our desire to save the planet, but to create new, sustainable, unionized jobs. To incorporate postal banking within the purview of Canada Post would certainly create more CUPW jobs, as would retrofitting post offices with solar panels. As would creating community hubs, which the 2016 Report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates argued for, if Canada Post were to set-up "location-specific opportunities for post offices to act as community hubs and respond to the local needs of its surrounding community...".

During the last 10 months, the pandemic has driven an important point home regarding another segment of the campaign. This is the necessity of having postal workers check in on, not only the elderly, but other vulnerable people. Now, more than ever, we have shown just how important postal workers are to keeping people safe at home.

Bettering our Work and World

In another vein, *Delivering Community Power's* push for transitioning the Canada Post fleet to electric vehicles must continue. Last fall, amid the pandemic, the Federal Government announced major investments in electric vehicle manufacturing and Ford and Chrysler are now producing electric vehicles and batteries (respectively) in Canada. This is a hopeful sign, and CUPW must continue to put pressure on our elected representatives to consider the manufacture of electric vehicles for Canada Post.

Delivering Community Power helps us drive home the idea that our climate action demands are important for postal workers. The climate emergency translates into more forest fires and the accompanying smoke, city smog, floods and major storms. It is important to fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for our own health and safety at work and at home. Just as importantly, the future of the planet is in jeopardy so if we do not act, we will not survive.

Fighting to Win

We have fine-tuned our new online tool to gather signatures and stay in touch with our supporters. A new webinar roll-out is about to take place featuring guest speaker Seth Klein, author of *The Good War*.

Nine new CUPW coordinators joined the campaign recently. They are equipped to take this campaign to the next level. With their help, we will be able to accomplish so much. Our goal is to have *Delivering Community Power* on everyone's lips, aware of the vision, and fighting collectively to bring community power to all

Canadians, through a revitalized public post office that responds to the needs of our communities, and that continues to deliver needed goods and services to people, pandemic or no.

Lastly, we are organizing a virtual symposium for next spring/summer that will bring together postal organizations from around the world, assemble our allies and our elected representatives, in an exchange on best practices for transitioning vehicle fleets from fossil fuels to electric power, for instituting postal banking, checking in on vulnerable populations including seniors, providing broadband connectivity, and creating community hubs. Learning best practices and sharing our own knowledge of the possibilities of expanding services offered by postal operations around the world is a sound way to educate elected representatives and policy specialists here at home.

CUPW is proud to be known for advancing climate change solutions, for endorsing *Just Recovery* principles, and for being hailed as a forward-thinking labour union on the international stage. Let's not stop now. Let's focus on achieving our goal of revitalizing Canada Post as a needed public service, and let's continue to bring progressive changes to our practices and ways of life.








CLEANERS in POSTAL FACILITIES



Side BY Side ON THE Front Line

OUR STRUGGLE FOR BEE-CLEAN MEMBERS



We've all become more aware of our reliance on skilled and safe cleaning work to keep everyone healthy. Cleaning is contracted out in Canada Post facilities, and CUPW works to organize these workers into our union. The cleaners work alongside our processing and delivery members, doing vital work under different working conditions, for the same ultimate employer – Canada Post Corporation.

CUPW's drive to organize the unorganized starts with the workers closest to us: cleaners, CUS contractors, couriers, and other parts of the postal supply chain.



*"You definitely need a union,
I feel safe at work, I felt safe
enough to come here and also
to go to my other job."*



Darlene Hiscock works for Bee-Clean in the St. John's plant, which was the first major CPC workplace to have a shutdown because of positive COVID-19 cases. The spread had happened outside the workplace, but it was still a stressful situation and Darlene was one of our members doing COVID-19 cleaning duties at the time. She went in to clean the plant, and also had to take time off from her other job because of the exposure.

"It's been a long year for sure," she says. "It's been a long time now we've been trying to get a contract, so I'm glad CUPW is getting this moving." She knows that her Bee-Clean co-workers would really benefit from better wages, overtime rates, paid sick leave, and some of the other conditions that Urban and RSMC members – and other CUPW Bee-Clean units – have.

In November, CUPW and the employer were to begin arbitration for the St. John's unit's first collective agreement. Hiscock says members in other CUPW bargaining units have been welcoming and supportive, which is the kind of solidarity we'll need to keep bargaining improvements for cleaners.

When cleaners do better, we all do better, especially in the era of COVID-19. And there is so much room for improvement in cleaners' working conditions. Since spring 2020, cleaners everywhere have been on the front line in pandemic conditions. Cleaners with union representation are in a better position to have their health and safety concerns heard, and to have paid sick leave, so that they don't have to work while sick for fear of losing their livelihood.

CUPW has negotiated exactly these things for some of our Bee-Clean members, and we still have many improvements to fight for in upcoming bargaining rounds.

In Hamilton, Kitchener, and Windsor, Bee-Clean now employs the cleaners who were originally organized with three separate employers. CUPW and Bee-Clean now negotiate a single collective agreement for the three locations, with the same wage rates in all three locations.

Organized into CUPW in October 2018, Bee-Clean New Brunswick (Dieppe and Saint John) was awarded their first collective agreement by an Arbitrator in January 2020. A first collective agreement is a very big step forward (as many RSMCs will also remember). Many of the working conditions in the contract are modelled on the collective agreement between CUPW and Bee-Clean in Ontario. In addition to wage increases, the agreement has a paid sick day, more vacation time, health and safety language, overtime pay, and other improvements.

Urban and RSMC members of CUPW know the value of these provisions, and how much we want these decent conditions for all workers. Still, the Arbitrator's award was quite conservative compared to our demands, and CUPW looks forward to improving the terms when the Bee-Clean New Brunswick unit's agreement expires in April 2021.

Even with the St. John's contract still to be negotiated, it's already making a difference for Hiscock to be a CUPW member. "You definitely need a union," she says, "I feel safe at work, I felt safe enough to come here and also to go to my other job."



A Celebration Decades in the Making

**Chronicling the 40-year
struggle of RSMCs
for equality through film**



In June 2018, an arbitrator ruled that Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers do work of equal value to their Urban counterparts, and that there was a wage gap between the groups, and in early 2019, this decision was finally reflected in RSMC paychecks. This victory didn't happen overnight. It involved many people and spanned many years.

In honour of this incredible achievement, filmmaker Michael Ostroff created *Justice and Dignity for All*, a documentary which tells the story of the 40-year struggle of RSMCs for equal rights, from the early stages, culminating with the pay equity decision.

A Victory Memorialized

The RSMC pay equity victory was a truly seismic win for RSMCS, and after such a long battle, it was a sweet conclusion that CUPW wanted to memorialize by making a movie about the struggle.

It's important to remember that prior to joining CUPW, RSMCs were considered independent contractors by Canada Post, and as such were not allowed to unionize. They had to bid for their mail route contract on a yearly basis, always running the risk of being undercut by another bidder—a stressful way to keep a job, not to mention the natural tendency of bidding low to avoid losing the contract. It was a race to the bottom. Moreover, they had no sick leave, no benefits, no pension, and their earnings often did not amount to minimum wage.

Their victory was unprecedented.

Making the Film

Discussions on making a film were spearheaded by 2nd National Vice-President, Dave Bleakney, and went on for a few years at CUPW, but became more serious in 2019 as the prolonged process of pay equity was reaching an end. CUPW enlisted filmmaker Michael Ostroff for the project.

Ostroff's research began in the summer of 2019. He read numerous articles including Geoff Bickerton and Cathy Kennedy's article "Confronting Precarious Work", he spoke to union officials, and began the process of finding the film's main characters. In late summer and early autumn, Ostroff met and interviewed numerous women who had participated in the fight for RSMC equality. Over the next few months, Ostroff wrote the script, going through 14 versions until he was satisfied. Production took place in numerous areas in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Ontario.

The film focuses on the Sisters who took up the struggle – Sisters like Sue Eybel, Alice Boudreau, Deborah Bourque, Karen Lee, Nancy Beauchamp, and Cynthia Patterson. It also showcased the realities of the rural mail carrier job by talking to Janet Russell and Veronica Linton in Brampton, Pearl Gillies in PEI, and Sylvie Pedneault and Sophie Grenier in Quebec.

A Virtual Premiere

The premiere of the film was held virtually on October 25, 2020. Over 200 members attended the premiere which also featured a panel discussion with former CUPW President, Deborah Bourque, one of the stalwart movers and shakers of this long campaign, Pearl Gillies who was also featured in the film, Nancy Beauchamp, National Director of the Montreal Region and who was a key negotiator leading up to the pay equity decision, and Sylvie Pedneault whose life changed considerably as a result of pay equity. National President Jan Simpson emceed the event, and engaged the sisters in a Q & A period after the film was broadcast.

Justice and Dignity for All shows the complete unwillingness of Canada Post to treat these workers fairly and the lengths to which the Corporation organized to keep this workforce down. And, it depicts what can actually happen when a group of workers decides it has had enough of the situation. Resistance is not for the faint of heart, as these sisters showed so brilliantly.

The RSMC Legacy

In an age when app-based food couriers and drivers are trying to eke out a living, we can draw connections and similarities to the struggles of rural mail carriers. In the age of the gig economy, it is good to remember that other workers suffered the same fate before gig work was even a thing. CUPW fought for the RSMCs and won the largest pay equity settlement in Canadian history. Over the years, we have organized and unionized T-Force couriers across the country, and bike couriers in Toronto and Montreal who also have employers who hide behind the independent contractor model. Most recently, CUPW organized Foodora couriers in Toronto and Mississauga, and won a precedent-setting decision that gig workers are, in fact, not independent contractors, but dependent contractors and employees who are entitled to benefit from labour laws, and who can organize into a union.

CUPW is committed to fight for workers, for fairness, and for jobs and decent working conditions. The RSMC struggle is added to a long list of battles won by the committed resistance of workers.

National Women's Committee

The idea of a National Women's Committee is neither radical nor ground-breaking today. It's a vital part of our union that fights for equality within CUPW as well as the broader society. But the creation of this committee did not come easily. It took many years and a group of dedicated women who knew their voices needed to be heard and wouldn't stop until they were.

Marion Pollack joined Canada Post in 1974, and immediately became involved in worker issues, becoming a shop steward the day her probation period ended, six months after she was hired.

Inspired and influenced by the second wave of feminism sweeping the country, in the late 1970s she helped organize the first CUPW local women's committee in Vancouver. "Canada Post didn't have many women workers back then so the first issues we tackled were lack of women's washrooms and sanitary napkin dispensers," she says. "We came together, developed a campaign on the work floor, and we won."

Young, Feisty Feminists

In the early 1980s, a group of women from across the country, including Pollack, Ruth Larson, Deborah Bourque and Allyson Mayo, to name a few, began to really push for a National Women's Committee. "We were a group of young, feisty feminists who knew that the only way women would make gains was to fight for them."

Organizing looked a little different back then as the women didn't have the same communication options we do today. Pollack, who was based in British Columbia, recalls writing letters to Larson, who just happened to be across the country in Newfoundland. Despite the logistical setbacks, the women did effect policy. They had put forward resolutions for maternity leave in bargaining for two rounds, before CUPW took on the fight during the strike of 1981, which would lead to wide-scale maternity leave in Canada.

By the time the 1983-84 National Convention took place, there was enough agitation from women across the country that a special night session was convened to discuss women's issues in the Union.

Although they had momentum, they encountered a lot of pushback. "We didn't think a women's committee would be so divisive," says Pollack. "We just needed a safe space to talk about our issues." But many people said it was unfair and argued for a men's committee if women got their own. "They didn't seem to understand that the Union itself at the time was a men's committee."

The CUPW National Women's Committee was formally created during the 1990 National Convention. "CUPW understood that they needed a National Women's Committee; that we weren't going to go away; that this was not divisive and would actually strengthen the Union," declares Pollack.

Before it became official, the women held a non-official meeting. "It felt like coming home. All the years of work had finally paid off," she adds.



Women's Committee Meeting, 2015

What we do:

CUPW's National Women's Committee meets once a year to discuss the major issues that affect women in the Union, across the country, and even globally. The Committee studies issues and makes recommendations to the National Executive Board about:

- Ways to increase the participation of women in all levels of the Union,
- Educate the membership on equality issues, and
- Improve the workplace for women workers.

It's made up of one elected woman from each region, as well as all women elected to a national or regional position. There are also three additional vacancies for women from the following groups: private sector units, LGBTQ and differently-abled women. The current NWC counts 47 women.



The Work isn't Done

The Committee that Pollack and so many others fought to bring to life has grown in numbers and strength over the years, and shaped a new generation of women leaders and activists.

Ellen Bowles, who works out of the Vernon Local in B.C. is part of this new generation.

Employed with Canada Post since 2014, Bowles was elected to the Committee in 2018, and attended her first meeting in January 2019. Bowles left her first meeting feeling “truly enlightened, empowered and encouraged.”

“The power that comes from the collective strength and determination of CUPW Sisters has proven itself many times and has motivated me to be more active. Before, I didn't have a full understanding of the history of the National Women's Committee, or know the depth of the struggle for women in our union. Now, through regional education and working on the Committee, I recognize the importance of being able to come together at a national level, with Sisters from all the regions to continue to develop strategies on supporting change.”

Bowles comes from a small local, and her workplace is predominantly women. The work she does through the Committee trickles down to her region and her local. “It's important to support Sisters in my region, to share the knowledge and resources available and find ways to build solidarity.”



Inaugural Atlantic
Women's Retreat, 2007

Women Postal
Workers from
World War 2



Marion Pollack, 1997

A Lasting Legacy

The legacy of the National Women's Committee and the work of women to bring this committee to life cannot be underestimated. When Pollack first joined CUPW, there were very few women local presidents, and women were over-represented in secretary-treasurer roles.

Today, a woman leads the national union along with an Executive Board which almost has gender parity. Women have led the three biggest locals in the country. The National Women's Committee has helped push forward women's issues and added harassment and anti-violence clauses in collective agreements.

“This happened because women in and out of the labour movement were organizing,” says Pollack. “The feminist movement influenced us to push forward and to let CUPW know women are important. It was also a lot of fun.”



FINANCIAL INCLUSION, EXPANDED SERVICES AND A BETTER POSTAL SYSTEM FOR FIRST NATIONS AND THE NORTH

It's time to learn about and meet the needs of Indigenous communities. We can improve services and create new ones—like postal banking or a restored and improved Food Mail program—that will promote inclusion, equity, employment, and access.



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Rethinking Union Education in the Pandemic Era



Nothing will throw a monkey wrench into union education quite like a situation in which people cannot interact face to face. The popular education model used by the Union greatly values interaction and participatory learning. It is a foundational principle that CUPW worker-educators and worker-learners have always held close.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent shutdowns across the country, turned everything upside down, and CUPW was forced to postpone indefinitely our Union Education programming. This was disappointing for members and facilitators, but given what was happening in the world, union education rightly took a back seat to dealing with the crisis.

All hands needed to be on deck to deal with the concerns faced by members over their health, their safety, and their rights. Some education staff and elected representatives were deployed to assist in this endeavour. Fairly quickly, we rolled-out a webinar for the Executive to answer questions on how to approach the virus, the work, and the boss. Crucial information was delivered about leave options for sickness, quarantine, high-risk members or having a loved one who was high-risk, childcare, and eldercare. We delivered four webinars in one week that reached well over 500 members who were able to share this information with their co-workers.

The Virtual World

The Labour movement in its entirety has had to adapt to this new reality and has provided opportunities to learn how to use virtual platforms. CUPW offered short workshops to help educators better understand the different tools to prepare them to shift their teachings online. In addition, we have participated in Online Facilitation Training offered by CLC and Training for Change, to help people design and adapt courses for online delivery. We are currently working to adapt some course content for this type of delivery.

Online learning presents new opportunities and challenges. It allows people to meet notwithstanding public health authority directives to physically distance and stay home. On the other hand, it is a challenge for members who are not familiar with computer applications, or who only have a cell phone. Of course, broadband internet connectivity is essential and this is an added disadvantage for some of our members. We continue to work on ways to simplify things for education participants.

Current Course Work

While the pandemic has halted most CUPW education courses, we are incredibly proud of the new Transformative Mediation course, which was developed in 2019-2020 and rolled out across the country virtually. From August to December, we trained

2018 UEP participants
getting ready for their
Polar Bear Dip in Port Elgin



facilitators and members of the Regional Conflict Resolution Committees using the Zoom platform. This was a colossal piece of work, and Yves Héneault, Denis Lemelin and Guy Lafontaine are responsible for making this happen.

The Labour History Course is currently undergoing revision and is near completion. We have updated it to reflect a more international lens on the labour struggle. In addition, we are experimenting with ways to simplify the course in order to maximize engagement with participants.

We also developed a short virtual seminar to accompany the Disability Management Guidebook for Shop Stewards released last summer.

In order to confront ongoing sexism, violence, and harassment against women in the workplace, we are creating a meaningful training session that confronts toxic masculinity in a way that is transformative for the participants. It is hoped that some of those who take the training can then turn around and deliver the training to others in their places of work.

We have taken this pandemic time to adapt course material so it can be delivered online, as well as develop and deliver online facilitation training to make sure the regions have the necessary skills and tools to move to online learning. This is a challenge for everyone, from the participants to the facilitators, and requires rethinking how we learn and what can best benefit participants in the absence of face to face contact.

Extending Education in Other Areas

The Education department is actively involved in the *Delivering Community Power* campaign. We organized the webinar announcing the second phase of the campaign which was delivered to over 200 members last summer.

In addition, the Education department led the development of the documentary about the RSMC struggle for equality. Working in collaboration with the film's director, Michael Ostroff, and the Communications department, we organized the film's virtual launch, which allowed members to view the film in their respective language, and to participate in the Q&A afterwards.

Education also played a key role in the organization and delivery of the Global Trade Union Assembly which took place in the summer of 2020. Working with UNI, and TUED (Trade Unions for Energy Democracy), we helped to organize and present different workshops including one on the importance of preserving and revitalizing public services.

Going forward, the Education department will be working closely with the regions in order to find ways to adapt additional course material for online delivery. We will also continue to work with other segments of CUPW to assist with communication, education, and international solidarity to ensure that our Union remain at the helm of progressive struggle and change.



Solidarity in Action

RENEWAL OF OUR PROJECT WITH THE COLOMBIAN UNION OF POSTAL WORKERS

The special relationship between the postal workers in Colombia and CUPW has been flourishing for almost 20 years, and it has grown stronger since the privatization of the Colombian postal service in 2006. As we all know, privatization inevitably leads to de-unionization. And that is what has happened: the union representing postal workers has since been dismantled.

But our Colombian brothers and sisters refused to give up and organized to create the STPC (Colombian Postal Workers' Union), a new union aiming to organize not only postal workers, but also couriers. CUPW supported this process.

As you might know, organizing in a country like Colombia is not easy. There, union organizers must deal with excessive bureaucracy and intimidation by private militias serving companies and different economic interests.

But they are not giving up. They have been fighting for unionization day after day for more than 15 years.

Industrial Union, Innovative Tactics

The STPC is an industrial labour union that stands out for the originality of its organizing methods, and takes into account the political situation in the country. Here are a few examples:

- **Union committees in targeted companies**
- **Health and safety and advocacy training (weekend sessions)**
- **Recreational activities for workers**
- **Information documents (health and safety and legal defence)**
- **Meeting place for members**



Photos from
the 2017
delegation
to Columbia
at the
STPC Local

The STPC also actively participates in union events, demonstrations and other activities of the Colombian labour movement. It is also viewed as a combative union that gives a loud and clear voice to its members. In the streets of Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, STPC and CUPW banners are proudly carried together.

Renewal

Because of this solidarity, the National Executive Board did not hesitate to renew its joint project with STPC for another year. The adopted budget, from Appendix "R" of the Urban Collective Agreement, will support organizing in the postal and courier sector.

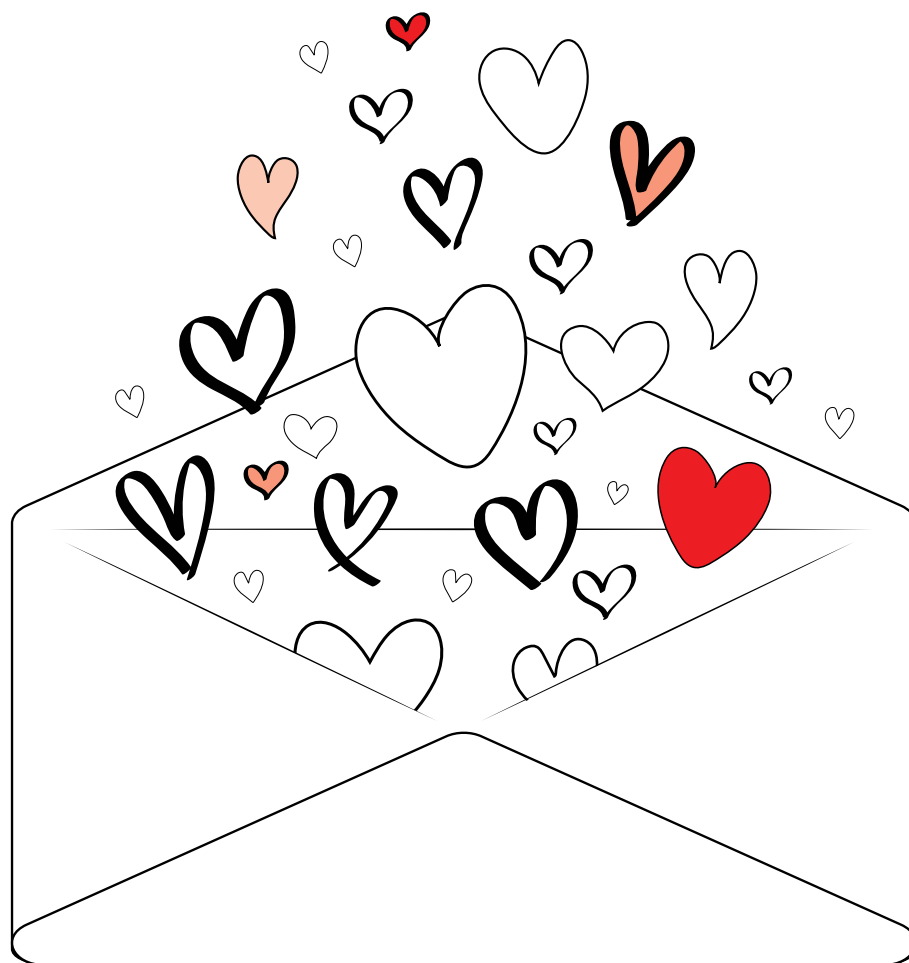
A Source of Pride

Our Colombian brothers and sisters patiently and tirelessly continue their organizing work. We salute their courage and determination in the current context, given the pandemic. We can learn from their example every day, and let it inspire us and the world.

Show Some Love for Your Posties!

COLOUR THIS POSTER AND TAPE IT TO YOUR WINDOW OR MAILBOX! PLEASE TAKE PICTURES, SHARE THEM TO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDS AND TAG **@CUPW** ON TWITTER AND **CUPWSTTP** ON FACEBOOK. TO DOWNLOAD A COPY OF THIS POSTER, VISIT **CUPW.CA/COLOURING**

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**THE TIME IS NOW TO DISMANTLE
SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION AND
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