

INTEGRATING EQUITY, ADDRESSING BARRIERS:

Innovative Learning Practices by Unions



by the Labour Education Centre
in partnership with the Centre for the Study of Education and Work

Foreword

This report has been prepared for the Canadian Council on Learning's Work and Learning Knowledge Centre (WLKC) by the Labour Education Centre and the Centre for the Study of Education and Work. It is issued by the Work and Learning Knowledge Centre as a basis for further knowledge exchange. The opinions and conclusions expressed in the document, however, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the WLKC members.

The Work and Learning Knowledge Centre is one of five knowledge centres established in various learning domains by the Canadian Council on Learning. The WLKC is co-led by Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters and the Canadian Labour Congress.

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Preface by Barbara Byers
Executive Vice-President
Canadian Labour Congress

Integrating Equity, Addressing Barriers provides an insight into some of the exciting education happening in Canada's labour movement. From workplace-based locals to large national programs, unions and their members are turning the vision of lifelong learning into reality. And it's lifelong learning with big goals: to help individual workers achieve work, union and personal goals, as well as to involve workers in collective efforts to improve conditions for all workers, for social and economic justice in our country and globally.

Lifelong learning is reduced to a cliché if equity goals are not integrated into education, if systemic and other barriers are not addressed. The Canadian Labour Congress and its affiliated unions are committed to expanding learning opportunities for workers, recognizing the need for particular efforts and initiatives to remove barriers.

This commitment is seen in the CLC's Anti-Racism Integration Guide for facilitators and program developers. Originating from the CLC Anti-Racism Task Force Report, the guide provides labour educators and program developers with tools, ideas and strategies to develop and deliver anti-racism analysis as part of labour education courses. Complementing labour's decades-long struggle against inequality and racism, provision of anti-racism and human rights courses, and incorporation of equity themes in other courses, the guide helps users to weave anti-racism into learning materials as part of the core learning objectives in education courses.

Barriers to participation are certainly pervasive: at work, in the community, in the union, in education and training. Well known are the barriers experienced by shift workers, part-time and precariously employed workers, workers who live in small or remote areas. Time and financial constraints are significant barriers for all workers.

Formidable barriers confront the majority of workers in Canada: Aboriginal workers, workers of colour, women, workers with disabilities, youth, immigrant workers, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered workers, workers who lack formal education and who may face literacy challenges. Their specific needs and situations require differentiated approaches in seeking solutions. The sketches contained in the report provide many examples of how unions tackle the challenges related to particular barriers.

Barriers are not only about access. As captured in this study, the very approach to learning is fundamental to whether workers are successfully engaged in education programs. A framework of labour education and popular education permeates much that is profiled in the sketches, and is the framework governing the education program of the Canadian Labour Congress.

The themes reflected in this report are themes also reflected in the 2006 CLC Labour Education Conference and Literacy Forum: to build a labour movement where more union members engage in the struggle for social justice, equality and workers' rights in our workplaces, communities and legislatures.

How can we use labour education to:

- build inclusive unions within an inclusive union movement
- enhance the day-to-day work of the union
- build political power
- expand the movement through coalition building, community work and organizing

These conference questions are addressed too in the programs profiled in this report.

Reading through the report sketches, my mind immediately jumped to other union examples not included here. As the CLC Officer responsible for literacy, education, apprenticeship and training, I have had the good fortune of seeing first-hand, innovative union programs which integrate equity and address barriers. But, as noted in the introduction, our experiences are usually shared first-hand – at conventions, conferences, forums, meetings and social gatherings. We don't often have time to write about the rich and varied work of which we are so proud. I thank the research team for gathering so many sketches in this short, three-month project, and challenge all of us to build on this beginning and expand our collective knowledge of union examples of innovative learning practices, integrating equity and addressing barriers.

Preface by René Roy
General Secretary
Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec

I want to congratulate those who conceived this study, which illustrates so well the « thousand and one ways of learning » experienced by adults. Indeed, the « Thousand and One Ways of Learning » is the theme of the Quebec Week for Adult Learning, celebrated for the past five years by the full range of organizations engaged in adult education. This celebration involves unions, education institutions, employers and community groups, all of whom provide a voice to the thousands of adults who make the personal investment needed to develop their talents and acquire new skills.

Proud of the commitment they have made, these adult learners insist that their needs be recognized in various ways – how programs are scheduled, how family responsibilities are integrated, how lack of previous diplomas is handled. They also ask that their rhythms of learning be respected, and that their informal experiential learning be valued. This study is aligned with the values asserted by these learners, and opens a vision of what is possible when adult learners are supported.

Access to formal and non-formal education is always a challenge, and it is reassuring to note in this study that union practices have developed so broadly to facilitate access. Unions should continue promoting a broad conception of lifelong learning, so that activists can better fulfil the many representation roles required in their movement, can broaden their personal development, and can engage actively as citizens. Specifically in regard to employment, we share with many others the realization that getting a job, maintaining and progressing in the labour market all require a solid basic skills development, an initial school diploma and recognized job skills certification.

The programs outlined here, the tools developed by affiliated unions, by labour councils and federations of labour all display the creativity of our movement, our capacity to renew learning to remedy gaps in the public education system. The effort to remove barriers is also reflected in the fact that this study will appear in both official languages. In congratulating the initiators of this project, I hope that their document will allow us to exchange experience more widely, and to make known the wide range of innovative efforts now underway to encourage and support adult learning.

Introduction

For a century and a half, Canada's labour movement has been teaching people about justice, decent work and ways to overcome discrimination. In a sense, every campaign and action in the labour movement is about learning. In a capitalist society that promotes individualism, competition, a narrow version of political democracy, and a sense of the inevitability of inequity, unions encourage workers to value and build community; to recognize inequality and act against it; to feel in solidarity with all people who are oppressed; and to build inclusive organizations.¹ In short, unions promote learning that uncovers and results in action against systemic barriers, and that builds towards a more equitable future.

Unions in Canada represent over 4.3 million workers in virtually all labour market sectors and occupational groups (over 3 million in unions affiliated to the Canadian Labour Congress). Learning practices by unions are seen in varied types of education programs: literacy; workplace programs; apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship and work skills training; labour education; programs that combine and build links between some or all of these areas through integrated initiatives.

Non-formal and informal learning

Writing about labour education (“designed to strengthen union representation, activity and culture”) in 1994, Bruce Spencer has noted that: “With more than 120,000 participants per year taking part in forms of labour education... it [is] Canada's most popular form of non-formal, non-vocational adult education.”² It is testament to the strength of anti-union views in our society that many otherwise well-informed Canadians know little about the scope and richness of this work.

On any weekend, there are dozens of courses under way in union halls, community centres and hotel rooms. The walls are covered with flip chart paper, videos are playing, role plays are moving from heated argument into laughter, instructors are steering the group back into the session objectives in other words, lively, practical and innovative adult education is happening. Yet this activity is usually invisible to the educators in the community-based literacy centre around the corner, and to the electronics teacher at the local college, or the professor of psychology in the nearby university extension program.

Beyond this extensive non-formal education (courses outside the formal education system) lies a vast sea of informal learning. Here too unions play a significant role, both in the workplace and more obviously in union campaigns, meetings, strikes, etc. Indeed, many union campaigns are of an explicit educational nature.

¹ See *Education for Changing Unions* for the “six threads” – a synthesis of labour education's agenda, pp. 3-4. Bev Burke, Jojo Geronimo, D'Arcy Martin, Barb Thomas, Carol Wall, *Education for Changing Unions*, Between the Lines, Toronto, 2002.

² 1994 article cited in “Labour Education in Canada Today,” Centre for Work and Community Studies, Athabasca University, A Report from “Learning Labour: a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Project”, Part of the New Approaches to Lifelong Learning Network, 2001, p 17.

We know that “participating in collective bargaining or a strike (either as participant or observer) or simply experiencing a workplace as a waged or salaried worker can result in informal learning if, in the process, one acquires and retains some knowledge about the process or event.”³ As Judy Darcy, past president of CUPE has said, “The picket line is a great school.” And we know that a great deal of learning happens in the conscious efforts to shift power in the workplace during upheavals such as an organizing drive.⁴ Unions are developing indicators that workers are learning to address systemic barriers. For example, activists call each other for help; they encourage the leadership of people from different backgrounds and experiences than themselves, and so on.⁵

This systematic effort draws on generations of story-telling among unionists, passing along the received wisdom of the movement to the next generation through informal channels, invisible to the employer. Now formalized in some unions through mentoring programs, this informal sharing of learning is built on inspiration as well as facts, on social and political vision as much as technical skills. It extends into labour’s advocacy for accessible public schooling, for publicly- and employer-funded job skills training, for language and literacy support to those excluded from the centres of educational capital.

Thus unions shape the character and experience of learning at work beyond course provision, in such areas as collective bargaining, shaping training and vocational education public policy, and shaping the everyday experience of workers within the labour process through information and action campaigns. This broader approach recognizes the inter-relationship of work with political and community spheres.⁶

A long tradition

Union learning builds on a long tradition. The voluntary efforts of working people, so essential in building their labour movement, have long been nurtured by adult education, both informal and non-formal. Unions have been promoting learning for more than a century.

Even before membership in unions was legalized in 1872, labour councils ran reading rooms for workers. Public mobilizations like the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 drew upon the organizational and writing skills picked up by organizers in the increasingly broad public school system. In the decades that followed, initiatives by the Workers Educational Association,⁷ the unions themselves and their allies in community and

³ Jeffery Taylor, *Union Learning: Canadian Labour Education in the Twentieth Century*, Toronto, Thompson Educational Publishing, 2001, p. 4.

⁴ Sue Milling, Education Director of the United Steel Workers, has remarked on how much workers learn in an organizing drive, because power and how it works becomes more clear.

⁵ See *Education for Changing Unions*, pp. 174-177 for indicators that people are acting on transformational learning.

⁶ Peter Sawchuk, “Unions and Workplace Learning,” J. Bratton, J. Helms-Mills, T. Pynch and P. Sawchuk, *Workplace Learning: A Critical Introduction*, Toronto, Garamond Press, 2003, pp. 141, 143.

⁷ Ian Radforth and Joan Sangster, “‘A Link Between Labour and Learning’: The Workers Educational Association in Ontario, 1917-1951” *Labour/Le Travailleur*, No.8/9 (Autumn/Spring, 1981-82) pp. 41-78.

political organizations ensured that the knowledge, skills and will needed to push for economic and social justice were well-developed among activists. It is on their shoulders that today's generation of union members stand when they make their unions a vehicle for learning.

Themes for today

Certain union education programs are the focus of this report. In seeking innovative learning practices, this project was particularly devoted to increasing knowledge of education programs that address systemic barriers related to class, age, gender, sexual orientation, race and cultural background, disability, literacy, language, lack of formal education as well as barriers faced by workers in small or remote areas, by part-time workers, by shift workers.

The report provides examples of the barriers identified and addressed, barriers which may exist in any and every aspect of education programs:

- *How* learning takes place: the approach to learning, the methodology
- *What* is the subject of learning: the content, the curriculum
- *Who* is and is not participating: the diversity of union members, reflected in recruitment and facilitation
- *Where* the programs are conducted: at the workplace, the union hall, the community, in workers' homes
- *When* programs are scheduled: on work time, on workers' own time while juggling shifts, more than one job, personal responsibilities
- *Why* unions initiate programs: the purpose, how unions shape and define their programs, program planning and design

What are the catalysts and conditions which produce transformational insights and an increased ability to act with others to change things? Is it easier for workers to develop this analysis when they themselves are the target of oppression, than when they have privilege in relation to other workers? What learning conditions assist workers to become good allies to sisters and brothers who experience different forms of oppression than themselves? This document opens such questions, but much deeper and more systematic work is needed to probe under the surface.

Two themes emerge throughout the report: the approach to learning itself, and the barriers of time and cost.

A union approach to learning

Union learning practices are informed by collective goals such as service to fellow workers, to the working class, to society, for social and economic justice. This contrasts with the individualistic goals and structure of learning that infuse much of the corporate training and formal schooling in Canada. As in other areas of union activity, education

builds solidarity, promotes critical thought and democratic participation, and aims to effect change in the workplace and beyond.

Underlying learning practices by unions is their recognition that barriers in education and training include approaches where people are seen as empty vessels to be filled rather than competent, engaged adults who bring with them an enormous range of experiences and capacities. The formal education system has failed many workers, as has much in corporate and other training. Many are left out or left behind.

There is no single set of union aims, objectives and methods in union learning practices. However, one can generally say that unions build their education programs using an adult education approach, reflecting their knowledge and experience of how workers learn best. Instead of an approach that invests the instructor with all knowledge and renders the learner passive, union learning practices rely on active learners who share knowledge with the instructor as together they explore the course topic. Worker-centred learning builds on what people know, and focuses on the whole person. Differences in identity and experience are acknowledged and a respectful and supportive learning environment is collectively valued and built.⁸

Instead of a methodology that relies on lectures and text, union learning practices rely on varied activities appealing to participants' "ears, eyes and hands" and different learning styles. Within union-based education there is extensive use of trained peer instructors. This peer-to-peer training approach often includes the matching of worker-trainers or tutors with staff facilitators or educators from the public education system.

In much of labour's educational practices, a popular education approach has been added to the principles of good adult education. Popular education is a specific tradition within adult education that educates and encourages collective action for change. Learning practices critically examine unequal power relations (race, class, gender, disability, heterosexism, ageism). Popular education pursues a positive social vision, aiming through transformative education to help change power relations in favour of greater social and economic equality.

Time and cost

Time and cost are significant learning barriers for adults.⁹ Unions address these barriers on a broad basis, following many avenues toward the goal of education and training opportunities for all workers.

⁸ For an example (from the area of literacy programs) of how labour outlines its education approach, see "Keys to a Worker-Centred Approach," *Learning for Our Lives: A Union Guide to Worker-Centred Literacy*, Canadian Labour Congress, 2000, pp. 23-25.

⁹ The most significant, for adults without a high school diploma, according to data from the 2003 Statistics Canada Adult Education and Training Survey. See Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker, "Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System," Canadian Policy Research Network, 2006, p. 30. <http://www.cprm.org/en/doc.cfm?doc=1479>

- *A cooperative approach*: unions' use of peer-to-peer and informal learning help stretch available resources.
- *Bargaining*: cents per hour per employee for a training fund; hours per year of paid time for education and training; tuition refund and assistance programs, etc.¹⁰
- *Working in sector councils*: beginning mainly in the 1990s, many sector councils bring together employers and unions in particular industries to address training, adjustment and other human resource issues.¹¹
- *Seeking government funding for specific projects*: for example, over the years the National Literacy Secretariat and Human Resources Development Canada at the local, regional, and national levels have been funding sources for union education and training projects.¹²
- *Advocating for public policy measures*: mandated employer training (for example, the Quebec 1% of payroll training requirement; proposals to include training as part of employment standards legislation); Employment Insurance reform to provide EI for workers on full or part-time training leave, plus EI premium reduction or rebate plan for employers who invest in training beyond a specific level.¹³
- *In apprenticeship*: advocating for full funding for an integrated federal/provincial apprenticeship program, as part of a comprehensive policy on apprenticeship.¹⁴

About these avenues, unions point out the limits of bargained training (for example due to employer size and resources), the precarious nature of project funding, the varied levels of commitment by employers to and uneven training results from sector councils. In apprenticeship, unions underline the general lack of existing apprenticeship opportunities which over-rides attempts to advance equity goals. Overall, unions emphasize the need for public policy on training entitlements.

¹⁰ See for example: Fabrizio Antonelli, "Training Provisions in Collective Agreements and Canadian Legislation," Canadian Labour Congress, 2006.

http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/Role_of_Unions/911

John O'Grady, "Training Trust Funds: a review of their history, legal foundations, and implications for trade union training strategy. Research Paper #37," Canadian Labour Congress, 2005.

<http://canadianlabour.ca/updir/trainingtrustfundsEn.pdf>

¹¹ A pioneering, innovative education initiative of the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress sector council (CSTEC) did not survive funding cuts. In the early 1990s, CSTEC negotiated an agreement with federal and some provincial support to deliver foundation skills, technical and industry skills, college accreditation including recognition of prior learning.

¹² See for example: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, "Executive Summary: Workplace Literacy: Funding Sources and Partnership Opportunities for Labour," Canadian Labour Congress, 2006.

http://canadianlabour.ca/updir/Executive_Summary-Eng.pdf

¹³ See for example, "Canadian Labour Congress. National Training Strategy," 2003.

<http://canadianlabour.ca/updir/nationalTraining.pdf>

In Quebec, see the common declaration of the central labour bodies (FTQ, CSN, CSD, CSQ) on adult basic and continuing education, "La formation continue en emploi, ça vaut le coup et le cout!" (April 2006):

<http://www.ftq.qc.ca/librairies/sfv/telecharger.php?fichier=987>

¹⁴ "Canadian Labour Congress: Policy on Apprenticeship," Approved by the CLC Executive Council, March 5, 2002. <http://canadianlabour.ca/updir/apprentice.pdf>

The themes reflected in this report are intimately tied to labour's vision of workplace training and life-long learning.

As elucidated in the opening paragraphs of the training document adopted by the 2005 Canadian Labour Congress convention:

“Canada needs a new approach to worker training. We need to develop a culture based on the recognition that continuous updating of skills and education is critical, not only for employers and workers, but for the country as a whole.

“A society with an active and engaged citizenry with the skills needed to participate fully in all aspects of life is more vital, inclusive and democratic. This means enabling all workers – both younger and older, full and part time and unemployed, Canadian born, as well as immigrants and refugees – to learn and upgrade their skills on an on-going basis throughout the course of their lives, both on the job and in the classroom.”¹⁵

About this report

Unions, central labour bodies, and beyond

The report includes only programs directly organized or developed by unions and central labour bodies, including some which are joint union-management programs. Central labour bodies bring together affiliated unions. They include municipal and district labour councils, building trades councils, provincial and territorial federations of labour, and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Unionized workers also participate in the many programs and learning initiatives offered by labour-associated organizations and community groups, such as:

- Union Counselling and other educational programs of Labour Community Services, offered in many centres across Canada (LCS programs are based on the CLC's and labour councils' partnerships with the United Way)
- Health and safety education, in Ontario led by the Workers Health and Safety Centre (initiated by the Ontario Federation of Labour in 1979). WHSC-trained worker activists have delivered health and safety programs to over 155,000 workers, leading to a reduction in the rate of workplace injuries because workers have a heightened awareness of health and safety procedures and of their rights, and are equipped to take action in hazardous situations.
- Cultural organizations such as the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre (Ontario) and Mayworks festivals in several communities
- Equity-seeking groups outside union structures but made up of union members, such as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance

¹⁵ Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) (2005). Labour's Vision of Workplace Training and Life-Long Learning. 24th Constitutional Convention. Ottawa, CLC, p. 1.
http://canadianlabour.ca/updir/CLC_Policy_on_Training.pdf

- Workers centres, such as Montreal’s Immigrant Workers Centre and Toronto’s Workers Action Centre
- Ethno-specific and community centres and organizations serving immigrant workers

In addition, many unions and trade unionists have links to various labour studies programs in colleges and universities in different parts of the country, and collaborate with academic centres such as the Centre for the Study of Education and Work (OISE/UT), the Centre for Research on Work and Society (York University), and *Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur la mondialisation et le travail* (Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work: University of Montreal, Université Laval and HEC Montreal).

“Sketching” a picture

In seeking to share knowledge through this report about innovative learning practices by unions, we were very conscious of the reality that unions do not frequently have or take the time to document and analyze their experiences in this area. We could not rely on existing research due to the many gaps in the written record. We therefore decided to prepare original short “sketches” to convey key information, contacts and references about a cross-section of innovative programs.

To supplement our own knowledge, we undertook outreach to the education and related committees within central labour bodies, etc., seeking additional programs to profile. We then interviewed the trade unionists directly involved in the identified programs and prepared a short sketch. The contact person named in each sketch vetted the sketch of the program for which they are responsible.

From the programs and initiatives that we reviewed and considered, these program sketches were specifically selected for their innovative content, pedagogy, methodology, or organizational practices related to program planning, recruitment and implementation.

The sketches provide a sampling of programs from different parts of Canada that aim to tackle one or more of the barriers identified above. Unfortunately, we were not able to include a sketch on a program addressing barriers faced by workers with disabilities. Examples are included from various unions at the local, provincial and national levels, from several central labour bodies at the labour council, regional building trades council, provincial and territorial federation and level of the Canadian Labour Congress. Some are joint union-management initiatives.

Some readers may find that some of the language in the sketches reflects an adversarial approach to employers. This is part of the reality of labour-management relations and union culture in Canada. Nonetheless, those in the adult education and other fields who may not share this perspective will draw many useful lessons from the union experiences outlined in the sketches.

The sketches are grouped by type of program:

- literacy, high school
- workplace programs
- apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, work skills training
- labour education
- integrated initiatives, that link two or more of these program areas

This structure may seem to reinforce an existing tendency to silo different types of union education and training programs. For example, some may view “only” labour education as transformative learning. However, there is increasing union recognition of the need to build links and increase integration of the different types of programs. There is similarly increasing recognition of the need to integrate equity into all of labour’s education and other activities.

We are quite certain that this brief report will bring forth many more examples of innovative learning practices by unions that address systemic and other barriers. We hope that this small “taste” will inspire unions and central labour bodies to document, analyze and share their experiences.

Acknowledgements

This report has been funded by the Canadian Council on Learning’s Work and Learning Knowledge Centre (WLKC). The WLKC is co-led by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME).

The project was a partnership between the Labour Education Centre (LEC) and the Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW). LEC is the education project of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. Its mission is to build the capacity of unions to plan, develop and deliver training, adjustment and labour education programs that transform the lives of individual members and build the strength, solidarity and equity of their unions. CSEW brings together educators from university, union, and community settings to understand and enrich the often undervalued informal and formal learning of working people. Located at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, the CSEW develops research and teaching programs on learning and work.

The project team included: from LEC, Anna Larsen (project coordinator) and Sue Folinsbee; from CSEW, D’Arcy Martin (with Jawara Gairey and Nick Bonokoski). We thank LEC Executive Director Jojo Geronimo and Acting Head of CSEW Peter Sawchuk for their insightful contributions to the project.

We particularly thank all those busy and dedicated labour educators who took the time to participate in our interviews, review sketches, and provide additional information.

Name of Program: Workplace Literacy Project

Central Labour Body: Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

Contact Person: Tamara Levine, Coordinator, CLC Workplace Literacy Project, 613.526.7437, tlevine@clc-ctc.ca

Initial Purpose: To help unions create conditions for workers to achieve their full individual and collective potential as literate, informed and active citizens and union members.

Barriers Addressed: literacy, language, gender, race, culture, class and issues of remote areas. These barriers are considered in terms of access to union education and other labour programs and addressing issues of racism, sexism, class, and regionalism.

Background Information

The Canadian Labour Congress is the central labour body for Canada's national and international unions, provincial and territorial federations of labour and 137 district labour councils. The CLC has over three million members.

How the Program Started

The CLC launched its first literacy initiative in 1990 with funding from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) for the Effective Adult Skills Training (EAST) Program in New Brunswick. EAST helped workers upgrade their literacy and communication skills in either English or French until its funding ended in 1993.

In 1996-97, the NLS provided funding to the CLC to conduct an organizational needs assessment to find out what affiliates wanted the CLC to do and what support they needed for their work in literacy. At that time, there was no national coordination of the literacy activities of the various unions across the country. Unions and federations of labour wanted the CLC to play a leadership role in literacy.

The CLC's consultations indicated that labour activists wanted to know what was happening in different parts of Canada, and how to start up and bargain for literacy programs with a union approach. They also wanted "how to" resources. In 1997, delegates attending the CLC National Training Conference honed the direction for the CLC's Literacy Project. This direction called for resources (including a newsletter), a literacy working group, an articulation of a labour vision for literacy and the opportunity for labour to maximize their work and share what was being learned across the country.

The organizational needs assessment and conference recommendations set the course of action for the CLC Literacy Project. This included 1) coordinating labour's efforts and activities in the area of literacy and basic skills; 2) communicating a labour vision of

worker-centred literacy, and 3) integrating literacy into the ongoing work of the CLC and its affiliates.

The Present Context

The present work of the CLC Literacy Project includes coordinating the CLC Literacy Working Group (LWG), which started in 1998. The LWG is a forum where labour literacy activists from national unions and provincial and territorial federations of labour exchange information, strategize and participate in skills development. The CLC provides technical support to unions and federations with respect to their literacy and clear language initiatives, develops resources and delivers courses and workshops. The project also focuses on integrating literacy and clear language into the work of the CLC and representing a labour view of literacy within and beyond the labour movement.

The CLC Literacy Project is housed in the CLC Education Department. The Literacy Coordinator reports to the Director of Education. Barbara Byers, CLC Executive Vice President and the elected officer responsible for the literacy file, reports regularly to the CLC Executive Council on literacy.

How the Program Evolved

For the first two or three years after the CLC Literacy Working Group was formed, more unions and federations got involved in literacy. It was a time of synergy. It was also a time when funding for programs like the Ontario Federation of Labour's Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) program and programs in British Columbia in health care and pulp and paper were cut by provincial governments. The CLC and the Literacy Working Group realized that it could not put all its energy into promoting literacy programs, because public policy and funding were not there to support programs. Although clear language had always been a part of the work, there was a move towards both clear language and the integration of literacy as a vehicle for organizational change.

Literacy and clear language: a two-way street

The move to clear language was an important development because it was a way to talk about literacy that involved everybody. Clear language caught on in an exciting way that fit well with union culture. It could be pitched politically, making the links between education, literacy and power. It connected how power elites use language to shut ordinary people out, which resonated with people's own experience and that of their families. Workers could readily relate to the desire that the labour movement, with its goals of social justice and inclusion, not inadvertently operate like "a closed club" because of not paying enough attention to communicating clearly.

Literacy as a metaphor for inclusion

There was also the realization that literacy is about more than learning opportunities and clear language. Integration of literacy and clear language is a metaphor for inclusion,

representing an organizational change approach that involves a different way of working and doing things. This realization came about because of the precariousness of funding for literacy programming, and also as a way to address sustainability issues and get commitment from key players in the labour movement. Integration means 1) building awareness of literacy issues organizationally, 2) building skills and awareness in clear language and design, and 3) integrating literacy into organizational structures, policies, programs and practices.

There was a realization from the start that barriers such as racism, sexism and class had to be addressed along with literacy and language. However, as the Literacy Project has grown and evolved, an understanding of these barriers has grown sharper.

Moving in from the margins

As the CLC's literacy work has moved towards literacy integration, it has become clear that there are pluses and minuses of being on the margins. Being on the margins due to uncertain project funding is difficult in terms of planning ahead and making a lasting impact on the mainstream work of the organization. At the same time, being on the margins can also offer unusual spaces of freedom to explore new territory, to try out new strategies and to work in ways that may be seen by some as unorthodox. The question is whether and to what extent this freedom will continue as the work moves into the mainstream of labour organizations.

The CLC has tried to bring literacy into the body of the CLC through various activities, including rewriting its constitution into clear language, and holding clear language training sessions for CLC employees. The CLC Literacy Project supports integration work by making efforts to model it within the CLC and supporting the unions and federations that want to take it on. For example, now that the CLC has put its constitution into clear language, several labour organizations have decided to do the same. One of the challenges of integration is figuring out the points of connection between literacy, clear language and labour's mainstream work, and to present integration in a way that people can understand. The challenge is to show how including literacy can enhance rather than just "add" to people's work, making the union's work easier and better.

An evaluation affirms the work

In 2003, the CLC hired an external evaluator to evaluate its literacy project. The CLC has implemented many of the recommendations from the evaluation. This includes a focus on building capacity for clear language, and greater advocacy work.

A *Clear Language Train the Trainer* course and a 9-hour workshop *Clear Language is a Union Issue* were developed by the CLC to build capacity within the labour movement. Now there are 40 clear language facilitators across the country trained to deliver the 9-hour workshop at schools across Canada in cooperation with labour councils and other organizations. This means less reliance on the CLC Literacy Coordinator to do all the

training. The CLC also developed a clear language animated film in partnership with the National Film Board.

Another way the project has evolved is its greater focus on advocacy. When the federal government held consultations on literacy and essential skills in 2005, labour was able to develop a common response coordinated by the CLC. The CLC also conducted research on essential skills to come up with a labour position. Other important advocacy work was the CLC Literacy Coordinator's participation in the National Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills set up by former Minister of State for Human Resources Development Claudette Bradshaw in late 2005.

Impacts

The CLC evaluation conducted in 2003 showed that the CLC Literacy Project was highly successful in meeting its objectives and carrying out its activities. Moreover, the CLC Literacy Project has had a positive impact on the labour movement as a whole. There is more understanding that labour has to consider what it can do differently to be more inclusive and get more members involved. Literacy, clear language and integration can help create a community where people feel welcome and at home, where they experience the union as "us" rather than "them." Members understand what the union is about and understand that they have a role to play. Democracy is more alive as a result, and organizations are more inclusive.

Class consciousness is raised through course exercises where people realize that lack of formal education is a result of inequality and income disparities, a consequence of poverty and class. In addition, workers see that the language of the elites – in institutions like academia, the legal, banking and medical systems – is a way of holding on to power that excludes most people.

What's Next

Literacy and clear language featured prominently at the 2006 CLC Literacy Forum and Education Conference. A process is in place to ensure that conference documents are produced in clear language. A template will be developed to use in future event planning.

The CLC current funding proposal to the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program would further the integration agenda. It plans to:

- 1) raise awareness of the union's role in promoting learning opportunities for workers
- 2) create literacy-rich environments for workers within a labour context through clear communications strategies
- 3) show how the tools of literacy and clear language can increase the effectiveness and accessibility of labour education
- 4) engage labour with literacy and clear language and build labour's commitment and capacity to sustain its literacy work

Reference for sketch: Bev Burke, *Evaluation of the Canadian Labour Congress' workplace literacy project*, Ottawa, Canadian Labour Congress, 2003.

Further References

Please see http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/literacy_en for CLC documents and resources on literacy and clear language. Resources include:

- Back issues of newsletter *Learning Together: Solidarity at Work*
- *Learning for Our Lives: A Union Guide to Worker-Centred Literacy*
- *Bargaining Basic Skills*
- *Seeds for Change: A Curriculum Guide for Worker-Centred Literacy*
- *Making it Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications*
- *Invasion of the Space Lobsters* (an animated film about clear language)

Tamara Levine, "Learning in Solidarity: A Union Approach to Worker-Centred Literacy," *Just Labour*, Vol. 1 (2002).

http://www.justlabour.yorku.ca/volume1/pdfs/jl_levine.pdf

Name of Program: Basic Skills Initiative

Central Labour Body: Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ)

Contact Person: Louise Miller, lmiller@ftq.qc.ca, 514.383.8015

Initial Purpose: To address the literacy needs of members, and support community-based organizations in securing stable funding for literacy work that benefits workers.

Barriers Addressed: literacy and other basic skill needs

Background Information

The FTQ is the largest central labour body in Québec with over 500,000 members, including most unionists in the private sector, construction and municipal public services. As a central labour body with limited resources and strong links to the literacy community, the FTQ decided several years ago that its role should be in advocacy and partnerships rather than direct delivery of basic skills programs to members. The FTQ coordinator herself has background in community-based literacy work, and the funding framework provides the FTQ with a seat at the table where policy is set and significant amounts of literacy funding are allocated.

The structures for co-determining training in Quebec are unique in North America, with overall coordination by a commission of labour market partners that includes employers, unions, the school system and community-based employment and training groups. In regional structures, the representation model is the same, while sectoral structures consist of parity representation for unions and employers. A network of union representatives has evolved, with its own needs for orientation and support.

In 1991, the FTQ decided that the public education structures and community organizations should be influenced to respond to workers' needs. When employers refuse to respond, or are not interested, some unions take the initiative, and organize French as a Second Language and basic skills initiatives with funding support from the co-determined structures. This has been particularly strong in UNITE and in UES 800, who have many immigrant members, led by people like Louise Mercier.

How the Program Started

After years of public pressure, the Quebec government passed Bill 90, a law that requires employers to allocate 1% of payroll to skills development of employees. Known as the "law of one percent," its regulations define what expenses are recognized as part of the 1%, and how funds are gathered from those employers who fall short of this amount. In turn, a commission of labour market partners, including unions, advises on policy around education and training and actually allocates these funds. Over time, the needs of FTQ members and other workers for access to literacy and basic skills programs has become a top priority at this table.

How the Program Evolved

The Labour Market Partners Commission is directly linked to the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity, and is consulted on all government policies that impact the labour market and continuing education. Its responsibility is decision-making in actually administering the overall fund for training. It also oversees joint sectoral committees. There are 17 regional structures in Quebec as well, similarly constituted. There are more than 40 FTQ reps in the regions, and more than 70 in the sectoral structures. This gives Louise Miller, the FTQ rep with overall responsibility for training, literacy and basic skills, a network of more than 100 FTQ people directly and deeply engaged in discussion and decisions. Over the last 10 years, the 5 labour bodies of UPA, CSD, CSQ, CSN and FTQ have learned to work together, to bring an integrated workers' voice to public discussions around learning and work. This resulted in a common poster and declaration for the 2006 "Adult Learning Week" across Quebec.

The Law of One Percent was phased in during 1995-97, with a provision to evaluate its impact in 10 years. This review was completed in early 2006, and changes will be made in coming months to make it more responsive to all the labour market partners, with fewer irritants. The recognition of competencies outside the formal school system was also a topic discussed at that time. The range and complexity of the review was very demanding on all parties, including the five union centrals that have representation in the structures. While the employers have sustained their ideological opposition to government involvement in training, and to the requirement for employer investment in training, in practice they contribute effectively to the day-to-day functioning of the system. When differences arise, political coordination among affiliates is handled by senior union leaders, notably the General Secretary of the FTQ, René Roy, who himself sits on the Labour Market Partners Commission.

Impacts

While great progress has happened in the broader structures, the resistance of employers in the workplace remains strong. Faced with the training needs of individuals, most employers still place priority on immediate production, limit backfilling for employees in training, and prefer "just in time" training to longer-term development. This culture is slow to change on the ground, but the context favours "enlightened" employer behaviour, rather than penalizing it as occurs in the rest of North America. The funding structure includes resources for research, and universities bid for this work. Unions are now discussing what research is needed to strengthen their knowledge base and to address challenges in future.

What's Next

In February 2006, the review of the law was completed. It involved hearings by a parliamentary committee, production of many research documents, and lengthy consultations with labour market partners. The closing remarks by the minister and the

opposition critic give a clear sense of the political points still at issue, but reaffirm a commitment to co-determination around learning and work issues.

Within the FTQ, a major need is to support the union reps on joint committees at the workplace level. As Louise Miller observes: “There’s no use having Cadillac clauses but no drivers’ licenses.” To avoid having elaborate models for training, but no way to actually get them moving, the FTQ has developed a guidebook on negotiating training, and a specific course for local union leaders who wish to get involved in training.

Further References

Commission des partenaires du marché du travail, “Mémoire présenté à la commission de l’économie et du travail, sur le rapport quinquennal de mise en oeuvre de la loi favorisant le développement de la formation de la main-d’oeuvre,” février 2006.

Emploi-Québec, “Politique d’Emploi-Québec en matière d’intervention sectorielle,” novembre 2005.

Declaration of the central labour bodies (FTQ, CSN, CSD, CSQ) on adult basic and continuing education, “La formation continue en emploi, ca vaut le coup et le cout!” (April 2006):

<http://www.ftq.qc.ca/librairies/sfv/telecharger.php?fichier=987>

Some information in English on government activities is available at

<http://www.emploi Quebec.net/anglais/index.htm>

Name of Program: Lighting the Way with Workplace Education

Central Labour Body: Nova Scotia Federation of Labour (NSFL)

Contact Person: Linda Wentzel, NSFL Workplace Education Coordinator,
902.634.4501, linda.wentzel@ns.sympatico.ca

Initial Purpose: To assist in the development of better skills in reading, writing and math, but in the context of the broader trade union struggle to empower working people.

Barriers Addressed: lack of formal education, class, members in rural areas

Background Information

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour (NSFL) has approximately 70,000 members representing more than 350 union locals in every sector of the Nova Scotian economy.

How the Program Started

The NSFL's work in literacy started in 1996 with a small grant from the Nova Scotia (NS) Department of Education. Unlike most provinces in Canada, the Nova Scotia government provides funding for the class instructors in workplace education programs. The Department had been promoting workplace education to unions but had not been successful in getting unions involved because they were suspicious of the Department. The Department then approached the NSFL's Education Committee about doing the promotion. The federation's literacy work began with promotion of workplace education, but soon the NSFL realized that it needed to do more than promotion.

The NSFL was keenly aware of literacy issues. The Federation saw a need to address literacy when it offered labour education schools and when members had trouble reading and writing. The Federation felt that it was important to address this gap through programs and better communication.

In 1999, the NSFL hired a workplace education coordinator with funding from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) to actually start programs. However, "unions didn't feel they had the expertise to run a program through a project team," says Linda Wentzel, NSFL Workplace Education Coordinator. To address this situation, Wentzel developed a 10-hour workshop which she piloted with one local. The workshop includes three modules and is still offered today. The three modules are: 1) What is literacy and essential skills? 2) What does a good program look like? and 3) Joint committees: making it work for workers.

Once the workshop was developed and delivered to locals, programs were easier to establish. By 2003, the NSFL was directly involved in setting up programs (which until 2006 number 20 to 30 in total). However, some unions still did not get involved because the class instructors were not unionized. Class instructors are all individuals on contract.

The joint committees in each workplace (called Project Teams) hire the instructors. They have the right and often do hire anyone they feel like hiring. Another reason that locals did not get involved was that they were waiting for their national office to give them direction.

How the Program Evolved

When it first got involved in literacy, the NSFL did not work with partners. Now it works with a multitude of different partners including national union affiliates, Workers Compensation, and Literacy Nova Scotia.

In 2002, the NSFL developed partnership agreements with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers (CEP) to give more union members access to government-sponsored workplace education programs and to ensure more union involvement and content in those programs. In the partnership agreements, national affiliates interested in accessing money from the provincial government entered into tripartite agreements with the NSFL and the NS Department of Education. Wentzel stresses, “With the tripartite agreement, all stakeholders had to be at the table or there would be no program.”

Currently, the NSFL has four labour seats on the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education Committee that informs government on issues related to workplace education. The NSFL also acts as liaison between unions and workplace educators.

In 2002, the NSFL undertook the development of the peer learning guide model and curriculum with CUPE, CEP and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). The model built on previous work from across Canada: Ontario’s Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) Program, and from British Columbia, the Learning and Education Assisted by Peers (LEAP) Program and the Joint Union Management Program (JUMP).

The Peer Learning Guide model trains union members to work with class instructors in workplace education classes. A 40-hour training program was piloted with CUPE, CEP, and CUPW members in January 2005. The intention was that the 12 participants would work directly in the classroom with instructors and peer learners. This year, the training will be rolled out to other unions not involved in the pilot training and the model will also be adapted for apprenticeship classes.

Rural areas and small workplaces are a key challenge for workplace education programs. The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour would like to work with labour councils to address this barrier, but to date the labour councils have not been able to work with the Workplace Education Coordinator on this issue.

For union members outside programs, the NSFL also looks to develop tools for workers through NSFL committees. For example, NSFL’s Workplace Education Coordinator is working with the NSFL committee for Occupational Health and Safety / Workers Compensation to explain to workers their rights and obligations in the WCB system.

Wentzel offered an awareness session and then supported their efforts to develop a wallet card in clear language that explains rights and how to file a claim. The next step is to develop a manual and train the trainer session for this group. With the Workers Compensation Board of Nova Scotia as a partner, every worker in the province will have a card. The success with this committee can lead to success with other committees. Clear language was able to help the committee address a need it had trouble addressing on its own. Committee members latched on to the literacy awareness and clear language training, and are driving the work forward.

Wentzel stresses, “You need a hook to get committees involved. There can be resistance to getting involved because of lack of awareness and unwillingness to take on another job. Literacy is not number one on the radar screen. Committees have competing priorities and people are over-stretched and over-worked.”

The NSFL is moving towards literacy integration as a way to sustain its work when funding ends. Literacy integration means getting the work into the lifeblood of the organization. An obvious way of doing this is to work with NSFL committees, building on the work of the federation.

In 2001, the NSFL passed a resolution to submit convention resolutions in a clear language format. The Resolution Committee saw clear language as a way to address poorly written resolutions and cut down on their workload. In 2002, 34 out of 80 resolutions were submitted in clear language. The Workplace Education Coordinator provided a template. The NSFL office staff has also taken the CLC clear language training.

Impacts

The first few years of the NSFL’s literacy work were difficult. It took three or four years of persistence by the Workplace Education Coordinator to get programs up and running. Now there is a regular report on literacy at the NSFL’s convention. People read the report and ask good questions. They want to know what else the project is doing besides programs. Members are more likely to go to the mike and debate an issue because it was written in clear language.

The workplace programs have a fair and open selection process. The learning focuses on rights and what people want for the future. Program participants are more involved in their local union. They have more opportunities for job promotion because they were able to get their GED. Those who have been through a program have encouraged their brothers and sisters to get involved too or suggested different programs that would benefit others. Participants also take a greater community role.

Class consciousness is raised in the NSFL’s work on seeing language as a class issue and how it is used to keep people out. Even if it is not explicitly addressed, class consciousness is always there in people’s report-backs. Class consciousness will become more explicit through the Peer Learning Guides playing a role in the classroom.

The communication level of the NSFL's office has also improved. People are proud of the work they send out.

Reference for case: Bev Burke, *Evaluation of the Canadian Labour Congress' workplace literacy project*, Ottawa, Canadian Labour Congress, 2003.

Further References

Literacy page on NSFL website: <http://www.nsfl.ns.ca/literacy.html>

Linda Wentzel, "Worker to Worker Learning: The Peer Learning Guide Model of Education," *Our Times*, December 2005/January 2006.

Name of Program: Literacy Program

Union: Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) National

Contact Person: Sylvia Sioufi, National Literacy Coordinator, 613.237.1590,
ssioufi@cupe.ca

Initial Purpose: To support and facilitate the development of workplace education programs for CUPE members.

Barriers Addressed: lack of formal education and literacy with a recognition of other barriers such as sexism, racism, class, and workers living in remote areas

Background Information

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is Canada's largest union representing over 500,000 public sector workers. CUPE members live and work in almost every Canadian town and city. They work in health care, education, municipal services, childcare, social services, transportation, communications, airlines, emergency services, and other vital services.

How the Program Started

CUPE's National Literacy Program formally started in 2000 and is funded by CUPE and the National Literacy Secretariat. The national literacy coordinator and a national working group guide the program which is housed in the Union Development Department. The motivation for the program was that CUPE was involved in a partnership with the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) at the local level. However, there was no support for these locals from CUPE National. Another motivator was available funding from the National Literacy Secretariat. CUPE indicates that without this funding, the program wouldn't have happened.

The Literacy Program began with support for local programs and promotion of clear language. In 2001, CUPE passed a resolution at its national convention in support of literacy, basic skills, workplace education programs and clear language. The resolution included a union vision for worker-centred literacy. Paul Moist, CUPE president stresses the importance of workplace education programs. He emphasizes, "A workplace skills program says that our union is about more than bargaining and servicing. It makes the union relevant to more people and strengthens our union as a whole."

Sylvia Sioufi, CUPE's National Literacy Coordinator recounts that initially CUPE was looking at opportunities for members who had a lack of formal education. "At first the focus was on supporting workplace programs. Clear language was always promoted but now it is a much bigger part of the work." She also reflects, "When we started, our members were losing jobs. People in their late 40s and early 50s without a lot of formal education had to retrain or find another job. The workplace had changed and literacy

skills were rusty.” She notes that for some workers there are double barriers such as when workers’ first language is not English and they have little formal education.

CUPE sees literacy as an access and equity issue: if people do not have grade 12 they can be left out. In CUPE’s training for labour literacy activists, it is important for people to understand why members may not have certain skills and to understand the experiences and barriers people faced at school. Another important focus of the training is how to make programs comfortable for members, programs in which members are reflected in materials and their voices are valued.

One of the challenges is participation from locals in small remote areas or small locals. In Nova Scotia, CUPE partnered with other unions through the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour to run training out of a labour centre to address this challenge.

At the present time, CUPE’s literacy program engages in five main activities. Activities include supporting local workplace education programs and facilitating new programs. They also focus on coordination, developing resources, offering workshops and union education, and integration of literacy and clear language into the life of the union.

How the Program Evolved

In 2003 CUPE added a third focus – integrating literacy and clear language into the organizational culture and work of the union at the national, provincial and local levels. Integration means working towards a time when a literacy/clear language “lens” is applied to planning, strategizing, implementing and evaluating everything the union does. CUPE saw the integration approach as a way to move literacy and clear language into new areas within CUPE. For example, there have been clear language edits of union courses, and CUPE schools include literacy workshops. Education staff have applied a literacy lens to their work and some national departments have done clear language work. In 2005, CUPE encouraged the submission of convention resolutions in clear language and created a national literacy award. The program has also provided support for bargaining clear language collective agreements.

Deepening commitment and involvement from the leadership has been key to the program’s success. In addition, a number of key strategies have built awareness and support for the program as well as the move towards integration. These strategies include partnerships, program location, creation of a literacy reference group, and clear language promotion.

Partnerships have played a key role in furthering CUPE’s literacy work. Key partners include CAMA, and the CLC.

Housing the program in the Union Development Program was strategic in that the department offered links with regions through education representatives, the member education program, and staff training. Literacy and clear language workshops and courses have helped to build activists and advocates for the program. The creation of a national

Literacy Reference Group (LRG) has helped ground the program across the union. The LRG received formal union status as a national working group in 2005. This change is an important move towards integrating literacy into CUPE's organizational structure.

Promotion of clear language has been an effective strategy in making the union's communications and programs more accessible to members. It has been a hook for work at conventions, conferences, within departments and within locals.

At the same time, there are systemic barriers. One barrier is that there isn't enough staff time to roll out all the work that needs to be done. This is another reason why integration is so important. For example, staff representatives are already in the regions and can make the links there. The literacy program can help them address issues they deal with such as people understanding their contract so that reps have less work upfront. At the same time, there are many issues that reps have to deal with. Often these issues are seen as coming from the top. Reps have to see benefits of taking on literacy and clear language.

There are other challenges as well. One is that there are different understandings within CUPE about what literacy means. For example, that literacy is about access and equity rather than just reading and writing. In addition, there is a need for more even integration at the Division level and more staff training and support in literacy and clear language.

Impacts

A 2006 evaluation of the CUPE Literacy Program shows clear results. All 600 CUPE members and staff interviewed for the evaluation stressed the importance of literacy and clear language and support for the program. Close to 100% said that literacy was an important union issue.

Through workplace education programs, CUPE members with the least opportunities for education and training have been able to build skills, adapt to changing job requirements and improve family relationships. Stories from workers across the country published in CUPE's *It's Our Right* emphasize these benefits. For example, the CUPE booklet includes the following comments by Terry Bennett, a CUPE Local 569 executive member and outside worker with the City of St. John's. "As a union activist, I am involved in many aspects of the workplace. This course seemed like a good idea and it was!" The program helped him streamline his writing and cope with all the reading he does as part of his union activities. "It also helped at home with the kids," he says, adding: "I used to write long, saucy letters to management. Now I write short, saucy letters to them."

Union benefits include increased member participation and the development of activist skills. The union is more accessible to members because of clear language. CUPE has a clear vision of literacy, strong leadership commitment, a full-time permanent staff position, and a formal national working group. The National Executive Board has made a

policy decision to fund the national literacy coordinator's position if NLS funding should end.

What's Next

The program will continue to focus on what's working and will shift to more of a focus on capacity building for staff. Since the program is an initiative of the union, CUPE will apply for external funding for specific projects. Some specific initiatives for the future include a focus on francophone members, partnerships with other employers, development of clear language supports for staff, and the development of a conference series. Part of the integration strategy will be to develop a supporting document for strategic direction in terms of where literacy fits within union priorities. Another priority will be to raise awareness of literacy at the bargaining table through a more coordinated approach.

References for sketch: Bev Burke and Jean Connon Unda, *Case Study: CUPE integrates literacy*, Ottawa, Canadian Labour Congress (in press); and Sue Folinsbee, *It's Our Right*, Ottawa, Canadian Union of Public Employees, 2005.

Further References

Please see www.cupe.ca/literacy for CUPE documents and resources on literacy and clear language. Documents include:

- Back issues of CUPE's *Literacy News*
- *Clear Language Contract Guide*
- *It's Our Right* booklet
- CUPE literacy pamphlet

Name of Program: BEST Program

Union: Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)

Contact Person: David Robertson or Laurell Ritchie, Work Organization and Training Department, cawwork@caw.ca, 416.495.3761

Initial Purpose: To provide literacy programs that will strengthen workers and the union and to integrate literacy into other CAW educational programs.

Barriers Addressed: literacy, language, lack of formal education; initiation of the program was seen as more about needs and entitlements

Background Information

The CAW is the largest private sector union in Canada with over 285,000 members from across the country. Members are from a diverse range of sectors including auto, auto parts, general manufacturing, fisheries, hospitality and gaming, mining, retail and health care.

How the Program Started

In the late 80s and through the early and mid 90s many CAW locals worked hard to upgrade literacy and basic skills in the workplace. CAW accounted for more than 60% of BEST's active workplace sites, most of them in the auto and auto parts sectors. The Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST project (Basic Education and Skills Training) was historically the largest such project in Canada.¹⁶

David Robertson, CAW's Director of Work Organization and Training explains that there were a number of different pieces that contributed to the union's involvement in literacy. Programs like BEST developed more consciousness about literacy on the part of the union. Plant closures also exposed the extent of literacy issues. Robertson explains, "If members have concerns about literacy when a plant closes, then we knew they had them before the plant closed." He adds that the union also began to think about how to make a union education system that included literacy and English as a second language.

At the same time, there was more public attention on literacy. This created a more conducive climate for influence. Robertson stresses that literacy in the workplace cannot be addressed without public support.

In 1997, the Conservative Harris government in Ontario terminated funding for workplace literacy. The current contract language with respect to the CAW BEST

¹⁶ Along with WEST in Saskatchewan (Workers Education for Skills Training), EAST in New Brunswick (Effective Adult Skills Training), LEC in Toronto (Labour Education Centre), and WEC in Hamilton (Workers Education Centre).

Program with the Big 3 automakers in Ontario has been an exemplary achievement. The Collective Agreement includes provisions for 50% paid class time for participants, based on 4 hours weekly and 37 weeks in a year, as well as 2 weeks paid leave for peer instructor training courses. The contract provides paid instruction and preparation time for peer instructors, and funding of needs assessment interviews with employees as well as program promotion and publicity.

How the Program Evolved

CAW's present literacy work comes out of the union's work in organizational development. The approach to literacy is two-pronged with literacy programming as one strategy and addressing literacy in all CAW education programs as the other.

When the government cut the OFL's BEST program, the CAW made a commitment to address needs through collective bargaining. In addition to the negotiated BEST programs with the Big 3 automakers, programs have been set up in other workplaces more informally. The programs are always union initiatives. Management does not come to the union to set up these initiatives.

The BEST program follows general principles on union education such as acknowledging and building on the experiences and skills of workers; involving hearts as well as minds; promoting solidarity and respect among workers; and enhancing workers' capacities for critical reflection and action. CAW BEST is an inclusive program that was developed for any member who has the basics and would like to upgrade their reading, writing, oral communication and math skills.

The CAW has recently moved from an emergent curriculum to one that uses a prepared curriculum 50% of the time. One reason for this development was because it became clear that people need some signposts and milestones. With the prepared curriculum, people know what they have accomplished and what they can do next — there are stages.

There are six prepared curriculum units. The units are: 1) About the CAW and Your Collective Agreement; 2) Community Action; 3) Time and Stress; 4) Reading the Newspaper; 5) A Respectful Workplace, and 6) Promoting a Safe Workplace.

Robertson also explains how the CAW is literacy-conscious in its education work. He says, "In all our programs we explain terms and concepts. Our reading materials are short and concise. Materials are also on audio tape or they are read aloud." There is an understanding that literacy consciousness needs to be built into the design of activities. Facilitators are trained to be conscious of class dynamics and sensitive to literacy.

Literacy consciousness has not moved much beyond union education programs. Briefs and policy papers will always be written as briefs and policy papers. But those documents are then used in CAW education programs. Robertson notes that it is difficult to make collective agreements accessible through a clear language, literacy lens.

In order to address any issue in the union, including literacy, there is a need for resources, capacity and opportunity. “Resources” refer to people and money. Capacity refers to trained discussion leaders, coordinators and staff who can do the work. Opportunity refers to people getting involved. In order to address literacy within the CAW, one looks for openings and then builds on them. The organizational practice is one of the openings (rather than having literacy as a formal CAW priority).

When the CAW developed the prepared curriculum, it looked like there might be more support through provincial and federal government dollars for literacy programs in the workplace. When that support did not come through, the challenge became how to make the BEST program happen. Bargaining literacy with employers is difficult. Without government support, the CAW will continue to have sporadic programs rather than a major initiative. The CAW can work with peer trainers, design curriculum, put supports in place, and get support for the program. The big issue is not the union but lack of public support. The partnerships that are critical to the CAW’s literacy work are 1) the labour management partnership, 2) the federal government, and 3) the literacy community.

Impacts

The benefits and impacts are anecdotal. “It’s important not to use testing and a results-based approach because it can reinforce credentialist practices in the workplace,” says Robertson. The benefits are seen in the personal accounts of program participants. At graduation, people talk about things they have done for the first time such as write a letter, or read to their child. The program opens up a world they didn’t have before. They may or may not have become a union activist. However, it is a moment of personal transformation that sends a powerful message to the union leadership. “The thinking is more what a great thing we have done as a union in providing opportunities rather than how this program has advanced us as a union,” concludes Robertson.

Reference for sketch: Canadian Auto Workers, *Instructor Handbook: CAW BEST Program*, Toronto, Canadian Auto Workers, 2006.

Further References

Please contact the CAW Work Organization and Training Department for more information about the instructor handbook and prepared curriculum for the CAW BEST Program.

“Union Education and Training”, CAW 20th Anniversary Collective Bargaining Convention, 2005:

<http://www.caw.ca/whatwedo/bargaining/cbpac/pdf/Chapter13.pdf>

Name of Program: Mature Student Diploma Program

Union: United Food and Commercial Workers Local 832

Contact Person: Heather Grant-Jury, Director, grant-jury@ufcwtraining.mb.ca, 204.775.8329

Initial Purpose: Training Centre Mission statement: “We want to assist our members to gain greater skills and knowledge so that they can be more confident in meeting the changes that lie ahead – in their workplace, in the labour market, in their union and in their communities. We want to break down barriers to education and training.”

Barriers Addressed: lack of formal education

Background Information

UFCW Local 832 has over 15,000 members in all areas of Manitoba, with members in the retail, food processing, health care, security, industrial, the garment industry, and transportation sectors. The Local’s Training Centre, primarily financed through a Trust Fund with bargained employer contributions, offers a wide variety of programs: stewards training, health and safety, computer training, English as an Additional Language, public speaking, Pilates, safe food handling, First Aid, conversational French and Spanish, customized training, and a Career Transition Service.

How the Program Started

When the Training Centre was established in 1998, the union secured accreditation with the province of Manitoba as an Adult Learning Centre. Like other adult learning centres, this enables the Centre to receive funding (through Winnipeg Technical College) to hire accredited teachers to deliver high school credit courses.

How the Program Evolved

The program is free to UFCW members, as well as friends and family members.

True to its description of providing a learner-centred, supportive environment, the Training Centre provides in-kind support for extra pieces such as individual tutoring, literacy and math upgrading.

Since 2000, the program has also offered Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). During the initial interview with potential participants, the program director identifies possible PLAR credits. This is followed by an assessment and report with PLAR recommendations to the Winnipeg Technical College.

Participants are encouraged to consider their prior, informal learning in computer skills, for example. As well, workers fluent in a language other than English or French may consider taking a written and oral exam for additional credit.

In addition to high school credit courses and PLAR credits, the program also suggests participants consider a community service credit (110 hours, with Ministry approval), and Student Initiated Projects (for credit, with approval).

Since 1998, 180 workers have graduated high school through the Training Centre. In each year, between 100 and 200 students participate in the program. About 85% go on to graduate.

Impacts

Many individuals leave school with minimal skills and qualifications. They go on to be disadvantaged in the labour market in terms of earnings and employment prospects. The education and training provided at the Training Centre for union members and their families boost productivity, wages, and individuals' self-image.

We find that a particular form of lifelong learning, work-related training, does have a positive impact on earnings. However, firms tend only to train those workers the employer feels will gain from training and which will benefit the employer.

At UFCW we are committed to assisting our members and families gain a formal education.

What's Next

The Training Centre offers many non-credit courses that are essential to the labour force. We are exploring the possibilities of accrediting these courses formally with Manitoba Education and Training through Winnipeg Technical College. Upon accreditation we anticipate that most active union members, families, and friends with or without their Grade 12 will be fully motivated to pursue a formal education in their field of interest.

Further References

Training Centre website: <http://www.ufcw832.com/training.php>

“Unions Do More Than File Grievances: Local 832 leads the way in providing educational opportunities,” *Union Magazine*, July 2006. ufcw832.com

Name of Program: Workplace Training Program

Union: Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)

Contact Person: David Robertson, Director of Work Organization and Training, cawwork@caw.ca, 416.495.3761

Initial Purpose: To enable all workers to participate in meaningful and effective workplace education and training on paid work time, “to develop our members, build the union, and change the world.”

Barriers Addressed: work itself – time considerations of all sorts; different educational levels and learning styles including sensitivity to gender, race and language

Background Information

The CAW is the largest private sector union in Canada with over 285,000 members across the country. Members work in a diverse range of sectors including auto, auto parts, general manufacturing, fisheries, hospitality and gaming, mining, retail and health care. The bargained Workplace Training Program is delivered to all 40,000 members employed by the “Big 3” automakers: General Motors, Daimler-Chrysler and Ford.

How the Program Started

Education programs are widespread throughout the Canadian Auto Workers: Work Organization and Training offerings, the Education Department’s weekend schools and Paid Educational Leave (PEL) program (see sketch in this report), women’s activists courses and women’s conferences organized by the Women’s Department, courses for Aboriginal workers and workers of colour as well as workplace-based human rights training from the Human Rights Department, health and safety courses for activists and leadership.

CAW also participates in any relevant and available external opportunity with potential training outcomes, for example over six sector councils, (the now defunct) Ontario Training and Adjustment Board and Canadian Labour Force Development Board. However, despite good intentions, little if any training resulted.

By the mid-1990s, the PEL program and week-long courses were well developed. But relatively few people could participate in these residential schools. The union decided to pursue a major expansion of the education and training program to the workplace. The Workplace Training Program was first bargained in 1996: eight hours of training for all members employed by the Big 3, to be delivered over the course of the collective agreement.

From the beginning, the approach to learning was as important as its delivery on paid work time. “The whole model of training in workplaces is pretty dismal,” comments

David Robertson. “The just-in-time, sit-down-and-listen model is problematic – this learning model is a barrier in itself. The union’s role is to influence the quality of workplace learning as well as the quantity. Our innovation reflects our knowledge of how workers learn best.”

How the Program Evolved

The current three-year contracts with the Big 3 entitle all members to 40 hours of training over the course of the agreement. In addition to the core Workplace Training Program (WTP), the union has bargained funding for:

- literacy and ESL program (see BEST sketch in this report)
- Skilled Trades Union Education Program
- Women and Technology program (see sketch in this report)
- retiree education program
- health and safety training fund

Providing 40 hours of training to 40,000 workers over three years is a huge, and expensive, undertaking. The WTP needs and has the support of union leadership at the top and locally.

Within the WTP core program, there are 2 course developers (curriculum writers), 4 national training coordinators, and 130 full-time trainers in the plants. The latter are recruited from the assembly line and trained by the union with bargained funding: 40-hour facilitator training, 40-hour human rights course, and then course-by-course training.

Classes are delivered in the plant or union hall (some new halls are built with classrooms, with funding negotiated for that purpose). At GM and Ford, courses are delivered day by day (maximum one day each); at Daimler-Chrysler, workers attend courses for one week: 32 hours are union-designed, 8 hours company-designed.

In each round of bargaining, specific course titles are listed in the Collective Agreement (avoids subsequent disagreements with the companies). The union sees worker knowledge of their union, plant-workplace-industry as a basic, fundamental worker entitlement. The WTP program therefore includes a course on union awareness (with updated material in each contract period) and a companion piece providing an industry overview.

Within each training round, there is also a course on building a respectful workplace. The focus may change: for example, the current training round focuses on sexual harassment; the next round will focus on racial and religious harassment, post 9/11.

Other offerings have included civics for trade unionists (how the political system works, government, the union’s role in politics, democratic electoral reform); globalization; the environment; pension reform.

An important consideration in course design is the challenge of the “captive audience.” Contrary to adult education principles and other union education programs, participation in the WTP is not voluntary. “This affects how we teach, what we teach – everything we do is influenced by that,” notes Robertson. The union also ensures that class groups, to the extent possible, mix gender, newer and older members, skilled trades and assembly, etc. Classes are offered in sign language as needed. Showing sensitivity to different learning and facilitator styles, there is a weighted gender participation of women trainers and all courses are taught by co-facilitators (man and woman if possible).

Impacts

Although there has been no systematic analysis of impacts to this point, trainers report general participant engagement and development. On the individual level, workers express views such as “education is fun”; “I can understand the world better.” Indeed, the course content is designed to help people develop an analysis, a better understanding of the world; however it’s not known how and if workers act on that.

The assurance of a respectful classroom and supportive learning environment gives workers space to voice opinion. “There are not too many other places where that can happen,” says Robertson. “It doesn’t happen on the line, when they deal with the company, or even in union meetings.” That and other features of the WTP disrupt workers’ biases regarding education and learning, starting a process that overcomes bad experiences in the school system and with company training. Whenever workers have an education opportunity, they always want more. Members see the trainers as education representatives and often go to them for information on other education programs. In this way, says Robertson, the WTP creates “an educational culture within the union that extends from new-hires to retirees and everything in between.”

Equity representatives point to statistics showing lower incidence of complaints after the respectful workplace course.

On the union level, all locals have attributed greater participation in union meetings and greater activity in the local to the impact of the WTP. At times, they report, there is a better quality to the discussion and debate due to the influence of the program.

There is a broader impact within the union generally. The workforce-wide participation in the WTP brings further to the fore questions of classroom dynamics, for example gender and race dynamics, as well as the effects of different educational levels and learning styles, varied first languages among workers, etc. The whole union becomes more sensitive to these issues, and in union education this underlines the importance in learning approaches of central concepts such as dialogical, “doing,” activity-based curriculum design.

By delivering the Workplace Training Program during people’s regular work shift, the work barrier is successfully overcome. Everyone can participate. This contributes to

individual, organizational and cultural changes, including an influence on the culture of the workplace – all part of the CAW’s goal.

What’s Next

While one might point to “what’s next” in the area of topics, instead the CAW emphasizes the need for public policy changes as critical next steps. Bargaining is limited, there is a clear financial barrier: training “won’t happen if there’s no dollars,” emphasizes Robertson. “And you need a lot of dollars to do it right.” The union does not have the bargaining strength in other sectors to win programs such as the WTP, and within the Big 3 the WTP is likely the limit.

Therefore, the union continues its argument for public policy change, both federally and provincially, to require employers to provide as a minimum, one week of training per year for each worker.

Further References

“Union Education and Training”, CAW 20th Anniversary Collective Bargaining Convention, 2005:

<http://www.caw.ca/whatwedo/bargaining/cbpac/pdf/Chapter13.pdf>

Name of Program: Anti-Harassment Workplace Training Program

Union: United Steel Workers (USW)

Contact Person: Sue Milling, Department Head, Education, Equality and Political Action Department, smilling@usw.ca, 416.544.5968

Initial Purpose: To involve members on equity issues outside the circle of current activists.

Barriers Addressed: gender, race

Background Information

The United Steel Workers represents 280,000 workers in a broad range of sectors across Canada, including those reflected in the union's formal name: United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union.

How the Program Started

For the Steelworkers, the two most effective and successful initiatives to address systemic barriers are the anti-harassment workplace training program and the Women of Steel leadership program. They were developed at about the same time in the late 1980s and early 1990s in a sympathetic political climate that was helping to support equality initiatives. In some cases this required unions and employers to take new steps around affirmative action, which strengthened the hand of a director who was determined to have leadership reflect the diversity in the membership.

Delivered to all employees on paid work time, the anti-harassment workplace training program has had wide influence, reaching thousands of members since its inception. The two-hour module raises awareness of what harassment is and why it's a union and company issue. The session gives people an opportunity to practice what they've learned by working through a quiz or a video. Parts of the program have had financial support from Labour Canada.

In addressing harassment, the union tried to include supervisors and managers in the sessions. The thinking was that if the union can have everyone together in mixed sessions, then everyone is getting the same message delivered in the same way. This also puts the spotlight on the fact that management is responsible for managing the workplace. Having it on company time meant that the program reached everyone, once it was cleared to go ahead. The USW experience is that where it is voluntary, people who might need it the most may not attend.

As Steelworkers staff representative Kai Lai notes: “A lot of the discussion is participant driven, and if matters of race or ethnicity come up it is pointed out that the human rights code affects both management and union.”

In District 6 (Ontario and the Atlantic provinces), and in District 3 (western Canada and the Territories) it is union policy to negotiate the anti-harassment workplace training into the collective agreements. In addition to the standard non-discrimination and harassment language seen in many collective agreements and in addition to the procedures outlining what to do if there is a complaint and how to investigate and attempt a resolution, the union has also been increasingly successful at negotiating the workplace training.

How the Program Evolved

Initially the focus was around racial harassment, but the Steelworkers expanded that because there were a number of high profile cases in the early 90s around sexual harassment. As a male-dominated union, it was important to take steps to address sexual harassment and gender discrimination. This commitment meant getting involved in campaigns like the white ribbon campaign and issues around violence prevention as an extension of the work of preventing and dealing with harassment.

Since the early 90s the union has also found that there is a need to integrate issues around disability and most recently around accommodation of religious differences and traditions. The program now is more holistic in its approach, but people who were around at the inception of the program have some concerns that the program may have moved further away from dealing with some of the issues of race and racial harassment.

In terms of the class perspective of the course, Sue Milling says: “We are pretty honest about why we are there and the employers are pretty honest about it as well. From an employer’s perspective, they’ll talk about cost saving. They are doing the training not only because it is the smart thing to do, but because they’d rather spend their money in other ways than in litigation. From the union perspective, we don’t shy away from what set the foundation for us in terms of justice for workers and the power relations in the workplace.”

As the union became conscious of addressing barriers, the course evolved. The union changed the materials, tried to integrate different issues into a quiz, changed a video that only focused on racial and sexual harassment from the 90s to one that encompasses the broad range of harassment and is set in a more familiar kind of workplace. The union is constantly training new instructors and works to reflect the diversity of the union in the trainer pool.

Impacts

The training has direct impacts on the workplace climate. As National Representative Marlene Gow observes: “The most common response is that people say they actually do notice an improvement in the way that people are able to deal with each other. At first,

employers are apprehensive and say they don't want to do the training because they will get the human rights complaints afterwards. We say it's better to know about it so that they can do proactive work to make sure there isn't a nasty incident that takes place. Along the way, we reach people that we would normally never see in the workplace, so it's a vehicle to find activists and plug them into the union."

Several of the equality initiatives have happened concurrently. The anti-harassment program and the Women of Steel leadership development program have generated support for the union's women's committees and human rights committees. In turn, this extends into work around issues of pride, and also disability rights.

After 16 years of the program and 16 years of solid support by the District 6 Director who is now the International President, the union staff and local union leaders and committee members understand what the union's policy is on harassment and have more experience "walking the talk." Last year, the non-discrimination and anti-harassment language was expanded and strengthened in the International Constitution. Awareness is promoted in all union events.

This cultural shift affects the union's community links. In the backlash from 9/11 and some anti-Muslim incidents in workplaces, the union has been increasing its outreach efforts and strengthening links with community groups.

What's Next

A joint committee on training to maintain the harassment-free workplace has been created. Workplace modules around conflict resolution are being developed to give participants more skills in dealing with situations, to prevent or resolve conflict before it escalates. The union is working to update the anti-harassment materials while looking at ways to integrate the training into other courses.

Further References

"Negotiating anti-harassment training" (2004): for union staff and local union leadership, to help them to negotiate the training. It has details of size, timing, and the outline of the two-hour session, as well as a list of employers.

Policy Booklet: made available to local union leadership at conferences and other union events.

Name of Program: Systemic and Anti-Racism Organizational Change Program (SAROC)

Union: Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)

Contact Person: Bebe De Freitas, OPSEU Human Rights Officer, bdefreitas@opseu.org, 416.443.8888

Initial Purpose: To eliminate the barriers to participation of women correctional officers; to promote the equality of women including accommodating staff with family responsibilities, reducing the numerical imbalance between men and women and lack of women in supervisory positions; to facilitate a speedy resolution to discrimination complaints.

Barriers Addressed: gender, and more recently: race

Background Information

OPSEU is the third largest union in Ontario, with approximately 100,000 full- and part-time members in such sectors as education, health care, social services, and the public service. OPSEU represents around 8000 members employed by the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Members include correctional officers as well as probation and parole officers, office staff, groundskeepers, etc. Women correctional officers are a minority in a workforce distinguished by a large proportion of white male workers. The Systemic and Anti-Racism Organizational Change Program is a joint union-management program.

How the Program Started

In 1995, the Grievance Settlement Board ruled on a grievance by a part-time female correctional officer related to sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the *O'Brien* case. The Board ordered both the Ministry and OPSEU to jointly develop a systemic change program focused on the culture, policies and practices in the ministry. The Ministry is responsible for all costs associated with the development and implementation of the program objectives.

How the Program Evolved

The joint union-management systemic change program has travelled a long and bumpy road. Although it's been 12 years since the Board order, "it's been 12 years of negotiating and litigating, not 12 years of work," says Marg Smoke, an OPSEU front-line member who has been involved in the program since the beginning. She notes the negative effects of changes in government during this period (three different governing parties), two provincial strikes, and downsizing-closures which affected women first as the least senior employees.

Nonetheless, the joint committee responsible for the program broke the objectives down into identifiers and initiatives, grouped in the following areas:

- accountability
- mediation
- staffing practices
- communication
- continuing education, training and professional development
- wellness
- mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and adjustment

There have been 50 program initiatives thus far, including:

- A dependent care fund and family responsibility policy have been established to enable women to participate fully in workplace opportunities, which include education, training, and developmental opportunities. For example, to participate in Training Centre programs – centralized in Hamilton, Ontario – employees may be away from home up to a week; funding has been made available to pay expenses over and above normal child care costs.
- All staff and managers participated in a 1-day conflict resolution workshop.
- OPSEU trainers conducted regional 1-day sessions for stewards, emphasizing their added responsibilities as stewards relative to workplace accommodation, harassment and discrimination.
- Female employees now have the opportunity once annually to network with other women within the Ministry away from their work sites without loss of pay.
- Wellness representatives in each worksite (at least one each from the union and management sides) are responsible for introducing wellness initiatives at the workplace based on needs and interests identified in member surveys (e.g. masseuse, referral to external service providers, “lunch and learn” – topics include issues related to shiftwork, raising children and teenagers, etc.).

Aside from training, other initiatives aim to prevent and respond to workplace incidents. For example, the mediation program established to resolve problems between co-workers is working well.

Additionally, a tracking registry records any ministry employee who has been found guilty of harassment or discrimination. If the employee moves to another worksite, future supervisors and senior management are informed. If within three years, the employee re-offends, the President of OPSEU and the Deputy Minister of Corrections have to meet to discuss this case.

Program initiatives also aim to support female correctional officers seeking promotional opportunities. Promotion usually depends on previous related experience gained through temporary positions which were often assigned arbitrarily. In 2004, the SAROC program initiated a short-term assignment policy which directs management to offer a temporary developmental opportunity first to a female employee who has had no previous opportunity, then to a male employee who has had no previous opportunity.

Now in its second full year, the policy is showing positive results. However, the policy has not been without implementation issues which oftentimes get confused with the policy in and of itself. Consequently, there has been some backlash (e.g. grievances) from senior white male employees who are asserting discrimination on the basis of gender. In response, OPSEU has met with its local executive officers, including stewards and grievors, to educate and facilitate an understanding of the intent of the policy and to encourage support for the same.

A significant change occurred to the program's mandate one year ago when it was expanded to include anti-racism, and the program's name was changed to: Systemic and Anti-Racism Organizational Change program. This development is directly related to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal decision in the McKinnon case and the remedial orders issued to address racism experienced by Aboriginal and racialized workers. As a result, the SAROC Steering Committee is now charged with determining how anti-racism is best integrated in the existing initiatives. Additional initiatives will also be determined and implemented based on the Tribunal's decision.

Impacts

The Steering Committee is committed to assessing the impact of the program. Has there been an organizational change as a result of the program? SAROC has retained the services of an auditing company specializing in assessing workplace discrimination and harassment and identifying barriers, and in the creation of tools and benchmarks. The auditors will evaluate the impact of the committee and its initiatives, including the organization's systems, management practices, policies and programs. The audit is to begin in 2007 and will take 18-24 months to complete.

What's Next

The SAROC program will include initiatives that remove barriers to full workplace participation for racialized and Aboriginal workers, including the creation and maintenance of a racism-free workplace.

"A critical initiative involves the creation of local Systemic and Anti-Racism Organizational Change Committees at each worksite," explains Smoke. The local SAROCCs will be responsible for ensuring that the various initiatives are appropriately implemented, monitoring compliance and coordinating the Mentoring Program for women, Aboriginal and racialized workers. The local committees will be comprised of employees who are committed to human rights principles and will be representative of women, Aboriginal, and racialized employees. If there is an absence of employees who meet the established criteria for participation on the committees, external community resources will be utilized.

OPSEU continues to strive to maintain the integrity of the SAROC program.

Name of Program: USW/ Teck Cominco Learning Centre

Union: United Steel Workers (USW) Locals 480 and 9705

Contact Person: Doug Jones, Local 480 President, 480pres@uswa480.com, 250.368.9131

Initial Purpose: To provide opportunities for individual development through learning and education.

Barriers Addressed: lack of formal education, shiftwork

Background Information

Teck Cominco is the main employer in Trail, British Columbia. The Trail complex is one of the world's largest zinc and lead smelting and refining sites. USW Local 480 represents over 1100 operations and maintenance workers (about 10% of the membership is female). USW Local 9705 represents about 170 office and technical workers (about half are women). The Learning Centre is a joint union-management initiative, overseen by a joint committee, and funded by the employer.

How the Program Started

The Learning Centre was established in 1998, based on an organizational needs assessment led by the joint union-management Refresh Education and Learning Committee (REAL). Workers participating in focus groups identified the following learning priorities: basic computer skills, reading comprehension, math, writing, science, and oral communication. Many workers did not have the education qualifications for company training for certain jobs, and a significant number of the aging workforce had not finished high school. Rotating and multiple shift schedules further complicated the picture.

Located on site (until 2006), the Learning Centre supports individual development through learning unrelated to specific jobs, offering only courses suggested by employees. All programs are offered on the workers' own time.

How the Program Evolved

From the beginning, the Learning Centre offered a wide variety of interest courses (Boat Pro, stained glass, more recently digital photography, gun safety, tree trimming) as well as academic upgrading and computer courses. Many hundreds of employees have taken one or more courses.

Workers, the union, and the employer have been pleased with the Learning Centre's contribution. "We're high on the program because it offers such a wide range of education, opportunities for workers to better themselves," says Doug Jones, USW Local

480 President. “It’s in the interest of the company too – for example, we have a better safety record.” As noted in the Conference Board case study referenced below, “The Learning Centre’s innovation lies in recognizing that people can develop skills that are transferable to the workplace while learning about topics that interest them and relate to other parts of their lives” (p. 5).

About 30 workers have graduated high school through credit courses arranged by the Learning Centre, including a married couple who were both employed at the workplace.

Community links and partnerships through the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, school board and Selkirk College are vital ingredients in the program’s success.

Over time, less need and interest have been seen for basic computer courses, high school completion, reading, math and study skills. This is a result of successful programs over the years as well as requirements of a minimum Grade 12 education for new-hires.

Impacts

The biggest impact has been seen on the individual level, notes Jones: “workers who have been able to get promoted due to their upgraded education, workers getting their grade 12. It’s enhanced people’s skills. For the union, there may be greater confidence in writing skills among stewards and safety reps.”

What’s Next

The Learning Centre is in somewhat of a transition. In 2006, course delivery shifted from the workplace to Selkirk College. While courses remain free for Teck Cominco employees and are scheduled to accommodate shift times, participation is now open to the general community. Other elements of Learning Centre services may take on more prominence in the period ahead: assisting workers in independent study, tutoring and other supports; providing information for employees on company education rebate policies; advocacy with trainers on job-specific training needs.

Workers continue to identify desired courses, expressing interest in wide-ranging topics. For example, a current course offering is “edible wild mushrooms.” Local 480 is thinking of suggesting a course on building a rock wall. Trail residents have built many unique rock walls, and the Labour Centre is looking at using a rock wall in a planned memorial park honouring union activists who have passed away.

Further References

Kurtis Kitagawa, “Cominco Ltd.’s Learning Centre: Refreshing and Extending Learning and Building an Engaged Workforce. Conference Board of Canada, Case Study 35”, 2001, <http://www.teckcominco.com/articles/operations/tr-case-35.pdf>

Name of Program: Fondation de la formation économique (Foundation for Economic Education), Workplace Education Initiative

Union: Fonds de solidarité de la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (Solidarity Fund FTQ)

Contact Person: Jean Sylvestre, Executive Director, jsylvestre@fondstfq.com, 514.383.8383 ext 5102

Initial Purpose: To equip workers to participate as full and informed partners in discussion of economic development in their workplace and the wider society.

Barriers Addressed: Class and region

Background Information

The Foundation for Economic Education is an integral part of Canada's largest labour-sponsored investment fund. The Solidarity Fund FTQ calls upon the solidarity and savings of Quebecers to help create and maintain jobs in Québec by investing in small and medium-sized businesses. It also strives to offer its shareholders a fair return for their retirement. Since its inception in June 1983, the Fund, whose net assets stood at \$6.6 billion as at May 31, 2006, has become a hub of knowledge, resources and contacts for Québec companies and a key player in the Québec economy. One of the four key objectives of the Solidarity Fund FTQ is "to promote the economic training of workers in order to enhance their contribution to Québec's economic development." Over half a million people, 30% of whom are FTQ members, have shares in the fund. In the past year, more than 5,000 members, mostly from FTQ unions, participated in the educational work of the Foundation for Economic Education. The Workplace Education Initiative deals specifically with those firms in which the Solidarity Fund has invested.

How the Program Started

In the course of deciding on an investment, the Solidarity Fund FTQ does a careful analysis of the financial, organizational, market and social health of an enterprise. This information is updated constantly, and shared with the employer. The challenge of the Workplace Education Initiative was how to engage all employees of the enterprise in understanding and using this information, for increased transparency throughout the workplace and a chance to influence its development. When an investment is confirmed, the employer contributes \$40 per employee per year to the Foundation for Economic Education, as a first effort to promote such learning. The Foundation pays back 75% of salaries and benefits for the time workers spend in Foundation training.

From an educational perspective, the first challenge is that most workers feel distant from the world of financial analysis, which has historically been jealously guarded as a part of "management rights" in most workplaces. In turn, many employers feel that their audited financial data are a distinctly private matter, whose disclosure can generate advantage to

competitors and disruptive questioning by employees. In addressing these attitudes, the Foundation has needed to act in a way that can be sustained over a long period, to gradually ensure that the enterprise is maintained and that the workers become increasingly knowledgeable about its functioning.

How the Program Evolved

In each partner enterprise, the Foundation staff, now totalling 12 people, develops a tool that summarizes for all employees the current financial health of the enterprise, and keeps it updated. This is the basis of relevant and informed discussion throughout the workplace. Although the Foundation is careful never to intervene in labour relations matters in any way, this information is also used by both management and the union in collective bargaining, and serves to clarify discussions about the financial capacity of the employer when faced with requests and proposals of any sort.

The Foundation commissioned in 2003 an evaluation of the program by an independent team at the UQAM (University of Québec at Montréal), which found that people very much enjoyed the courses and found them personally enriching. However, the courses had not enough impact on the culture of the workplace. This was disturbing, and led to a complete re-working of the program.

One change introduced was to focus effort on the front-line supervisors in each enterprise, whose role had always been operational rather than financial. The initial courses did not include them, with the result that workers who had participated in courses would put questions to supervisors that they could not answer. This created much frustration on both sides. While sessions now often separate hourly employees from supervisory staff, the training itself is substantially the same.

The main change was to break up the program into a series of steps whose timing can be adapted to the needs and culture of the specific enterprise. The first step is an orientation session, in which all employees are booked off at the expense of the employer for a 90-minute orientation to the Solidarity Fund, why it invested in the enterprise, and what its investment will mean; the session introduces the company's business plan.

The second step is a day-long session for everyone, which further explores the business plan of the enterprise and addresses workers' perceptions concerning its evolution. Its goal is to close the gap between perceptions and reality concerning the company's success in attaining the business plan's objectives.

The other four steps build on this, over a period of two years or more, to establish a basis for informed dialogue on financial issues throughout the enterprise. The major tool involved is the company's audited financial statements.

Impacts

Last year, the Workplace Education Initiative reached 50 enterprises, up from the level of 30 at which it had remained for some time. The openness of employers is greater, the engagement of workers is greater, and the recognition of the Solidarity Fund as an active contributor to the culture of the workplace has increased. It is hoped that when a formal evaluation is next conducted, the results will be significantly different.

What's Next

The Workplace Education Initiative is one of five major programs conducted by the Foundation for Economic Education. The others include training of the network of voluntary local representatives for the Solidarity Fund, in which more than 200 sessions have been held, involving more than 2,000 workers. More than 500 summer students are employed through a fund partly financed by the Solidarity Fund. The Foundation trains these students as to their rights and responsibilities as workers and citizens. Further growth and improved quality in the Workplace Education Initiative is the basis for credibility and effectiveness of the Solidarity Fund's work in these other areas.

Further References

“Apprendre pour agir ensemble,” Rapport annuel 2005-2006, Fondation de la formation économique, Fonds de solidarité FTQ.

English-language material is available at www.fondsftq.com.

Name of Program: Apprenticeship Training Program for Postal Workers

Union: Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)

Contact Person: John Macdonald, Research Specialist, jmacdonald@cupw-sttp.org, 613.236.7238

Initial Purpose: To provide apprenticeship opportunities for non-skilled-trades CUPW members employed by Canada Post; to provide upgrading opportunities for skilled trades members.

Barriers Addressed: lack of promotional opportunities related to skills training; gender

Background Information

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers has 54,000 members in large and small communities across Canada. A majority of members work for Canada Post as rural and suburban mail carriers, letter carriers, mail service couriers, postal clerks, mail handlers, mail dispatchers, technicians, mechanics, electricians and electronic technicians.

How the Program Started

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the union saw Canada Post systematically contract work to the private sector and aggressively downsize the workforce. At the same time, the union knew that the corporation was modernizing the sortation equipment in the plants. The union saw many instances of the corporation hiring skilled tradespeople “from the street,” rather than promoting “from within,” on the grounds that the employees did not have the requisite skills for the changing technology.

The union knew that with a declining number of jobs, employee opportunities for promotion into the higher paid and skilled technical services positions were diminishing. Therefore, the union sought ways to oppose the contracting out and downsizing, and to create opportunities for internal promotion. Employee training was among the strategies it embraced.

Negotiated in 1994, the Apprenticeship Training Program was launched with company funding the following year. It operates under the pre-existing joint union-management Service Expansion and Workplace Development Committee.

How the Program Evolved

More than 200 workers across the country have taken the program, training either as vehicle mechanics or industrial maintenance technicians (the two streams of the program).

The program pays the trainees a regular salary and all expenses, including childcare if necessary, throughout the 4-5 year training period. As an apprenticeship program, it combines classroom and mentored on-the-job training. The classroom portion is delivered by community colleges across the country. The on-the-job portion – the bulk of the training – takes place in Canada Post facilities. The program credits trainees for prior learning and work experience, and is delivered in French and English.

Access to the program goes to the most senior applicants who pass an aptitude test administered by the college. The test is supposed to measure the ability of applicants to learn the skills taught in the program. The college offers feedback to those who do not pass regarding their results and suggests remedial courses they can take. To date, the major obstacles to passing the test have been mathematics, and English for those who do not speak it as a first language.

The union also wanted to ensure women had access to the program. In the early 1990s there were no more than one or two women among the 900 or so technical service employees. This was the situation even though Canada Post has legal obligations to eliminate employment barriers in the workplace under the federal Employment Equity Act. Women have secured employment in other groups, such as letter carriers, wicket clerks, and sortation workers.

Working toward the goal of gender equity, the union negotiated the following language into the collective agreement: “The Committee shall make a particular effort to encourage women to apply for admission to apprenticeship programs and training programs.” (Article 40.21). However, in practice, the seniority provision blocked women’s access to the program.

To overcome this problem, the union negotiated two gender-based seniority lists in the 1999 round of bargaining. It got agreement from management that half of the apprentice positions open to employees not already working in technical services will be offered to women applicants on the basis of seniority and test results. This was a major step for the union with respect to the principle of seniority. Never before had it departed from a single seniority list.

Disappointingly, however, despite these two measures and periodic union outreach initiatives to women, women’s participation in the program has been minimal. Only one woman has graduated from the industrial maintenance stream, while two more are nearing completion. No women have applied to the vehicle mechanic stream.

The joint program’s implementation has seen the union doing most of the work. The union has provided a progressive vision of the program, committed leadership and very effective coordination. Ironically, the corporate failure to carry its load creates a very positive outcome for the union. To all intents and purposes, the union drives the program.

Accordingly, the union has insured that the program meets union objectives and is delivered in a professional manner. Moreover, the union works with the membership very

dynamically and positively as the program leader. The program thus becomes an organizing vehicle that strengthens the union.

Impacts

The benefits of the program to the trainees are significant: upon completion, a guaranteed job as a mechanic or maintenance technician, a job that pays the highest postal worker wage; training in portable technical skills that can be used in other industries; certification by a recognized post secondary educational institution that will be recognized by other employers.

Canada Post gains substantially from the program as well: technicians versed in the latest technology and knowledge; improved employee morale as they see the new job and training opportunities, both of which had been all but non-existent in the skilled classifications in recent years; a better relationship with the union, at least on this front.

From the union's point of view, aside from the low participation rate of women, the program has achieved impressive results. On the whole, the trainees have scored extremely high marks in the college part of the program and performed very well on the job. Their college marks are even more remarkable because most of them have been out of school for many years. The colleges, for their part, have consistently commended the trainees for their strong motivation and hard work. Praised too are the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm they have brought to their classes, making them a stimulating challenge for the instructors. The learning, it seems, has gone in both directions.

The union is particularly pleased about the opportunities that the program brings to members to enter skilled trades jobs, or to upgrade their abilities if they are already in the trades group. These opportunities simply did not exist prior to the advent of the program.

The program has also produced unforeseen benefits for the union. These pertain to relations between members working in the technical services group, as well as relations between that group of members (who are a minority within the union membership) and the union as a whole.

By periodically bringing them together at the colleges, the program has significantly improved contact and communication between technical services members dispersed in plants across the country. As a result, they are now much better able than previously to share information about and resolve their unique workplace issues.

Similarly, they are much more able to formulate and articulate common technical services positions on collective bargaining issues, which will help them advance their concerns to the bargaining table. They had a great deal of difficulty doing this previously.

By playing a dynamic lead role in the development and implementation of the program, the union has substantially improved its contact and communication with the technical services group, and its knowledge about their work and concerns. It has reduced the gap

between the union leadership and this somewhat marginalized component of the membership.

What's Next

Despite its success, the future of the program is not secure. Management is introducing sortation equipment that requires less high-end maintenance, and appears to want to reduce the number of equipment-containing plants by consolidating mail processing. This means that the corporation will require fewer maintenance employees who have undergone the training from the program.

Further References

“Apprenticeship Training in the Canadian Post Office: The Union’s View of the Union’s Idea,” John Macdonald, Research Specialist, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, presented at the Second International Conference on Training, Employability and Employment, Monash University in conjunction with the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management at Leeds University Business School, September 2005.

http://www.cupw.ca/index.cfm/ci_id/5263/la_id/1.htm

Name of Program: Women and Technology Program

Union: Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)

Contact Person: David Robertson, Director, or Karen Cobb, National Representative, Work Organization and Training Department, cawwork@caw.ca, 416.495.3761

Initial Purpose: To provide supportive education and training for women auto workers to increase participation in technical jobs and apprenticeships.

Barriers Addressed: gender

Background Information

The CAW is the largest private sector union in Canada with over 285,000 members across the country. Members work in a diverse range of sectors including auto, auto parts, general manufacturing, fisheries, hospitality and gaming, mining, retail and health care. The bargained Women and Technology Program is offered to women who are among the 40,000 members employed by the “Big 3” automakers: General Motors, Daimler-Chrysler and Ford.

How the Program Started

CAW research into equity and barrier issues at Northern Telecom had previously underscored that even women with high seniority were not applying for higher-paid technology-based jobs due to perceived barriers. Bargaining seniority for promotional opportunities was not enough. To address the barriers faced by women considering apprenticeships or technical jobs, the union developed the week-long Women and Technology course. The course addresses cultural barriers and builds confidence. It reviews the history and role of the Skilled Trades in the CAW and prepares women to write apprenticeship exams. It discusses issues such as juggling school, work, and home. For the past six years, the Women and Technology course has been offered by the CAW Workplace Training Program, bargained with the Big 3 automakers.

How the Program Evolved

A one-week residential program offered once a year at the CAW Education Centre in Port Elgin, Ontario, the Women and Technology Course is delivered to 60 female production workers (20 from each automaker). Women apply to attend, responding to notices posted in the workplace and also encouraged by activists and leaders from their union local.

Co-facilitated by journeywomen and trained discussion leaders, the course includes such topics as:

- how new technology is affecting our work
- what are the trades?

- intimidation issues
- juggling home-school-work

Hands-on exercises are an integral part of the program, for example using tools to wire a light bulb and switch. During the week, journeymen from four different trades visit the participants. Wonderful role models, they are featured in a show-and-tell panel, describing a day at work as a tool and die maker, for example.

The course also integrates a union piece on skilled trades and women in the union, how women have overcome barriers in the union's past and present. A speaker from the CAW Women's Department is featured during the program.

Another key feature of the Women and Technology course is "the dreaded test." Each person applying for an apprenticeship faces a test in math, spatial relations, grammar, trouble-shooting, problem-solving. The test is a huge intimidating factor, as aspiring apprentices don't know what to expect.

"The more workplaces become credential-based, the more the test barrier emerges," comments David Robertson. "Compare workplace tests with LSATs [test for entry into law school]. People practice for LSATs, but workers are expected to go in cold. They've been out of school for most of their lives, but are now expected to deliver on tests. They may know the material but can't necessarily deliver in a test. So, we said, let's start practicing the test."

Using a simulated test prepared by the CAW Skilled Trades Department, course participants go through the test, and then have a homework assignment based on any areas of shortcomings. This is followed by another test. Participants can see their improvement, which boosts morale and lessens the test barrier.

Having won the course for women, the bargaining committee asked, why only women? Why not men? The union discussion concluded, yes, everyone should have this kind of opportunity. There is now a pre-apprenticeship course offered in the various auto plant locations (16 hours over one weekend, on half paid time). The course has run in each of the Big 3 and now runs when there is an apprenticeship intake. Notes Robertson, "running the course for women helped to leverage the other course. We ended up with more than what we had originally gone for."

Impacts

On a whole number of levels, the program has a significant individual impact. Participants are excited and enthusiastic about the experience. Facilitators report visibly seeing the women's confidence building through the week. Says Karen Cobb, Project Coordinator: "In itself, 60 sisters from a variety of workplaces, for a week, half to two-thirds of whom are at Port Elgin for the first time –that in itself is an accomplishment, it's great."

While only a handful of women have got apprenticeships since the course inception, several more have come forward to take the test. In a recent apprenticeship opportunity for example, 85% of the women who had taken the course took the test (the worker with the highest test score gets the opportunity). Others may learn that apprenticeship is not for them, and that too is a positive outcome of the course.

There are many more educational spin-offs: for example course participants who go on to work on improving high school math.

There's an impact too on journeywomen who speak in the program. These women were not necessarily actively involved in the union previously. Now one of them is on the skilled trades apprenticeship committee, the first woman to hold that position. Another journeywoman was recently appointed by CAW leadership as one of the four staff coordinators of the union's skilled trades program.

Union locals report that more women attend union meetings, and express greater interest in other education programs. All of these impacts contribute to and reflect the changing union culture.

What's Next

The biggest problem today is limited apprenticeship opportunities. "We had started to bargain apprentice numbers, started to get commitments, but lost it in the last round of bargaining. The companies said no – we're closing plants, not taking on apprentices," says Robertson. In this situation, the program emphasizes technology on the job more generally. The union makes it clear that there is no guarantee of apprenticeships.

"This underlines the limits of bargaining," emphasizes Robertson. "We handled the politics inside the union, the financial issues, we got total union commitment. We can overcome the barriers, bargain the support programs – and all of this is not easy. But then it's all gone. The companies say no. The biggest barrier is that there's no public policy that makes apprenticeships real in Canada."

Further References

"Union Education and Training", CAW 20th Anniversary Collective Bargaining Convention, 2005:

<http://www.caw.ca/whatwedo/bargaining/cbpac/pdf/Chapter13.pdf>

Name of Program: Preparing Northern Women for Careers in Trades and Technical Occupations in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut: A Model for Program Development and Delivery

Central Labour Body: Northern Territories Federation of Labour

Contact Person: Steve Petersen, Regional Vice President, 867.445.6604, peterssnwt@yahoo.ca

Initial Purpose: To encourage more women to enter trades occupations in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Barriers Addressed: gender, literacy, remote areas

Background Information

The Northern Territories Federation of Labour (NTFL) is the central labour body for unions in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

How the Program Started

There are increasing job opportunities and skills shortages in the mining, oil and gas sectors of the northern economy, particularly in trades and technical occupations. However, northern women are not directly benefiting from this job growth. With funding support from the National Literacy Secretariat, the NTFL launched a comprehensive initiative to encourage more women to enter trades occupations.

In year one (2004/2005), the project studied the current status of women in trades and technical occupations in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Barriers to women's participation were identified, and a number of recommendations were offered to encourage more women to seek training in hands-on work.

Year two (2005/2006) focused on developing a model for successful training programs for women interested in trades and technical occupations. This phase researched existing programs in Canada, looked at curricula and learning materials for distance and individualized learning, possible promotional approaches, and supports that would be needed.

How the Program Evolved

The local landscape surrounding the project changed considerably in phase two. Two different groups that were previously working separately are now working in partnership: the North West Territories Status of Women and the Northern Territories Federation of Labour. Together, the groups (and a wide base of partners) have developed a proposal for a three-year pilot project that will include a 16-week exploratory training program, and a number of evening and weekend brief introductory sessions. The pilot project will

directly draw on the expertise of the existing strong women's organizations in the north in planning programs for local women and understanding their needs.

Impacts

A guide for northern program planners was developed, together with a comprehensive research report.

An unexpected impact was the use of the project's preliminary report as evidence in a human rights hearing in British Columbia involving the delivery of a trades program in a college.

The project generated interest across the north in preparing women academically, socially and personally for entering careers in previously male-dominated workplaces. Political interest has been sparked – the project has been asked to prepare a brief for a supportive MLA to present to the Legislative Assembly.

The role of labour in initiatives to better the circumstances of northern women, and thus to address northern skills shortages, has been enhanced, made more visible, and more acceptable to organizations who previously were suspicious of labour's role and intent. This will enable the NTFL to undertake other activities and to play a larger role in the future.

What's Next

The role of the NTFL has now shifted to embrace various research activities, writing of selected resources, and political development. The Federation will also evaluate the Status of Women's pilot project over three years.

Plans are under way to organize a national conference in May 2007 on women facing barriers in the trades.

Further References

“Preparing Northern Women for Careers in Trades and Technical Occupations in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut: A Model for Program Development and Delivery,” prepared by Kate Tompkins, commissioned by the Northern Territories Federation of Labour, 2006.

Name of Program: Work Skills Program

Union: United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1977

Contact Person: Marv Funk, Director, Clifford Evans Training Centre,
mfunk@cliffordevans.com, 519.658.2444 or 1.800.819.3069

Initial Purpose: Training Centre mission statement: “The Clifford Evans Training Centre is committed to the development and delivery of professional programs that will have an impact on improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and work-life of all its members.”

Barriers Addressed: promotional opportunities for part-time employees

Background Information

UFCW Local 1977 represents 8500 members, including full- and part-time employees of Zehrs supermarkets in southern Ontario. The Clifford Evans Training Centre (CETC) is a union-management partnership financed by a negotiated training fund jointly trusted with Zehrs. The CETC offers a variety of programs including computers, food safety, labour management studies, human resource, business and specific skills. General interest seminars are a popular feature, available for members, family and friends. 95% of the programs are taught by peer instructors (fellow Zehrs employees).

How the Program Started

15-20 years ago, store workers were roughly 60% part-time and 40% full-time. It was possible for members to aim for a full-time, good paying job. Currently though, retail food stores run at 15% full time and 85% part time. Few part-time members can hope for full-time hours at good pay. This means that part-timers are not likely to remain in the business for long.

In addition, many of the jobs part-time members get are classic dead-end jobs that don't lead to a full-time position. Full-time positions don't exist for front-end packers and cashiers, for example.

Members wanted training so as to access other jobs. Company practice had been that the employee had to actually quit their job, and then reapply to the new department. Further, management wouldn't recognize members' skills.

The union tried to address these barriers by giving part-time workers opportunities to learn skills in departments that have a higher perceived status as well as a greater chance of leading to full-time employment, such as Pharmacy or Natural Value (health food). These are the departments where the company has actually added full-time positions.

The Work Skills Program is designed for part-time employees. It offers training in “new skills,” on workers’ own time.

How the Program Evolved

In 1998, the Work Skills Program offered its first Floral Designer course. The employer initially resisted union efforts for a pharmacy course as “too technical.” But two years later, the employer agreed.

“This was a long process,” explains Training Centre director Marv Funk. “It was mostly about building trust. Most companies are reluctant to have the union influence who gets positions in a store. We had to show that only members that demonstrated clearly agreed-to standards would be considered graduates. Practically, this meant that not every member passed because they couldn’t meet the standards. However this also meant that we found better ways to instruct, so that more members, who were motivated to do the work, could graduate.

“Over time there has been a reduction of resistance to our courses and graduates by the company. This is partly due to the increased need for qualified part-time workers and partly due to the trust we’ve developed based on ‘doing what we said we were going to do.’ ”

The Training Centre has partnered with the company to identify the competencies needed to be successful in an entry level position in such departments as Pharmacy, Natural Value, Floral, Cosmetics. The union negotiated Letters of Understanding with the employer to recognize workers’ skills so that graduates are not tested by the company nor denied the opportunity to get into these departments.

The skills workers learn at the Training Centre are portable and transferable: portable in the sense that the Training Centre will support graduates wherever they go for employment (even outside the company), and transferable because Zehrs really wants to use the Centre’s graduates.

Impacts

Tuition-free training allows members, who couldn’t otherwise afford such training, to learn new skills. The union-negotiated fund helps those members who may not be able to advance their career because of financial constraints.

Relevant training that considers a worker’s life situation limits the actual classroom time so members can still earn an income. (Full-time enrolment in college or university severely cuts back on an employee’s earning power.)

The Letters of Understanding negotiated by the union also guarantee members the right to work in more than one department. Traditionally workers could not be scheduled in

more than one department. However, Training Centre graduates can work in all departments for which they have graduated in CETC courses.

Some Letters of Understanding, i.e. Pharmacy Technician, agree to two weeks of paid training once graduates are placed in the department. The training focuses on location-specific upgrading that cannot be accomplished at the CETC.

80% of Pharmacy Technician graduates are now employed in the Pharmacy Department.

What's Next

As more departments are added to traditional grocery stores, the CETC will continue to offer its members courses so they are able to learn new skills that will open opportunities for more rewarding work and possibly gain access to full-time employment in a sector that has few such placements.

Further References

Training Centre website: <http://www.cliffordevans.com>

“Worker Perspectives of Effective Training,” revised 2005. Report based on 1996 and 2004 research on retail workers and training. Includes “five principles to effective worker training”: relevance, personal interest, worker involvement, workplace support, and sensitivity towards individual participants.

<http://cliffordevans.com/research%20project/rspage1.html>

Name of Program: CHOICE (Career, Help, Opportunity, Incentive, Community, Employment) Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Union: Carpenters' Local 27

Contact Person: Eddie Thornton, Executive Director, Carpenters Local 27 Training Centre, 905.652.5507, ext. 234

Initial Purpose: To stimulate economic development in low income communities while providing youth from within the communities with long-term career opportunities in construction.

Barriers Addressed: class

Background Information

Carpenters Local 27 represents 7200 carpenters, cabinetmakers, millwrights, piledrivers, lathers, framers, floorlayers, roofers, drywallers in the Greater Toronto and surrounding areas.

The Carpenters' Local Union 27 Joint Apprenticeship and Training Trust Fund is a jointly trusted labour-management training centre located in Woodbridge, Ontario. It was established to serve the human resources development needs of both the Local 27 membership and its employers. Since its inception in 1986, the Training Trust Fund has offered an extensive variety of pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, health and safety, and journey-worker upgrading courses to thousands of students.

How the Program Started

About 10 years ago, Local 27 apprenticeship training leaders learned about the U.S. program "America Works" (now called American Community Partnerships): building trades workers help to restore public housing projects working directly with youth from these neighbourhoods. Ever since, the Local has worked to launch a similar program in the Greater Toronto Area.

A successful one-off project was held in 2004 in cooperation with an apartment development company and local school trustee, involving youth in the renovation of apartment units in the complex in which they lived. CHOICE got off the ground in 2005 after the union approached Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC, the largest public housing company in Canada).

How the Program Evolved

Targetting "youth at risk" who were out of work and out of school, CHOICE brings together the Carpenters union, TCHC, YMCA and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). With wages paid by the YMCA and TCHC, youth

receive two weeks of health and safety and hand tool training at the Carpenters Training Centre, followed by eight weeks in the workplace. Other supports, such as mentoring and life skills counseling, are also provided. Although MTCU provides a per diem to the union for the training, Local 27 contributed \$100,000 from union funds to ensure the full training costs were met.

The participants are residents of public housing. The young workers do restoration work to doors, walls, kitchen cabinets, flooring, and are exposed to trades such as drywall and carpentry. Four students work alongside one instructor.

Impacts

So far two programs have run successfully, with over 20 graduates. “There’s a lot of growing up that goes on,” says union training director Cristina Selva. “As they’re building their skills and making a living wage, they start looking forward to a better life. Their confidence level goes up. They start making plans.”

A key part of the program is union assistance with subsequent job placement. All youth got jobs, some with TCHC and the rest with pre-apprenticeship private sector opportunities. Registering as an apprentice carries a \$1000 cost, so the union ensures that further work experience can be gained before the young worker makes the move to apprenticeship. Two of the program participants are currently working as apprentice carpenters.

The union sees CHOICE as a way to give back to the community. “We have to give a chance to these youth,” says Eddie Thornton, Carpenters Local 27 Training Centre Executive Director. “They are the future, the future workforce, and need to be given opportunities.”

What’s Next

CHOICE continues, with union efforts to expand participation from other building trades unions.

Further References

Carpenters’ Local 27 Training Centre website:
<http://www.corcc.com/training/about.html>

Karen Charnow Lior and Arlene Wortsman, research by Jen Liptrot, “Renewing Apprenticeship: Innovative Approaches”, published by the Toronto Training Board, March 2006. <http://ttb.on.ca/ttb/epublications/RenewingApprenticeship4.pdf>

Name of Program: Youth Access to Apprenticeship

Central Labour Body: Central Ontario Building Trades

Contact Person: Joe Bowdring, Youth Access Director, Central Ontario Community Builders, 416.449.5115 ext. 226.

Initial Purpose: To help youth from “at risk” Toronto neighbourhoods access apprenticeship.

Barriers Addressed: race, class

Background Information

The Central Ontario Building Trades (COBT) represents 45,000 skilled trades men and women in Central Ontario. COBT contributes to community efforts through the independent non-profit Central Ontario Community Builders.

How the Program Started

A January 2006 meeting brought together Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry, Toronto Mayor David Miller, Central Ontario Building Trades Business Manager Jay Peterson and Joe Bowdring. The goal was to find ways to provide apprenticeship opportunities for youth from 13 “at risk” Toronto neighbourhoods.

How the Program Evolved

When one of 26 agencies in the at-risk neighbourhoods has contact with a youth interested in pursuing a trade, they forward the youth’s resume to Toronto City Hall, and from there to Joe Bowdring. After meeting with the youth, Bowdring contacts one of the 24 different trades that are part of the Central Ontario Building Trades. Trade Training Centres recommend any extra training or upgrading if needed (for example, extra high school credits). They encourage the youth, and will assist the youth in entering the trade chosen.

Bowdring makes himself available to the young person should they want contact. He encourages them to be “ambassadors” to their neighbourhoods about construction as a career and the unions in the construction trades.

Impacts

By September 2006, 22 young men, mostly of Black, Caribbean background, have entered or will be entering registered apprenticeships.

What's Next

Joe Bowdring hopes to promote the concept among unions and their respective associations in other sectors outside of construction such as the manufacturing, heavy industrial and commercial sectors, nation-wide.

Further References

Central Ontario Community Builders website: www.cocb.ca

Name of Program: Canadian Experience Course

Union: International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Local 353

Contact Person: Barry Stevens, President IBEW 353, ibew.barrystevens@sympatico.ca, 416.510.3530

Initial Purpose: To provide new Canadians with assistance to enter the workforce and obtain decent paying jobs.

Barriers Addressed: language, “Canadian experience”

Background Information

IBEW Local 353 is one of Canada’s largest and oldest electrical locals, with approximately 6000 members in the Greater Toronto Area. Members work in the industrial, commercial, institutional and low-rise residential sectors. Member electricians work in new construction, as well as maintenance, communication cabling, fibre optics, networking, and linework (utilities).

How the Program Started

Many new Canadians face a crisis of unemployment and under-employment, often because their qualifications are ignored or they cannot find assistance in obtaining “on the job” experience. In 2004, part of Barry Stevens’ work for IBEW Local 353 was to review resumes, interview applicants and assist them to apply for non-union jobs, or in some cases, offer union membership.

Stevens noticed that large numbers of resumes were from Russian, Polish, Spanish and particularly Chinese workers. Many had been engineers in their home country (electrical or mechanical engineers for example), but were unable to find work in Canada. In seeking work related to their education and training, they had taken the Ministry test and had acquired an electrical license, many at the Red Seal level. While their success reflected their excellent theoretical knowledge, they often lacked practical skills and experience.

The IBEW Local held monthly meetings for the workers, while attempting to get government funding to run special courses for the immigrant workers, grouped by language so as to provide relevant support. When their efforts to get funding proved unsuccessful, the Local decided to run a course at their own expense (about \$30,000 for materials, instructors, etc).

How the Program Evolved

The 10-session Canadian Experience Course was delivered for 20 Chinese speaking workers (of whom about 80% had university training). Run over five weekends at no

charge to the participants, the course was so in demand that 20 additional workers sat and watched (taking notes).

Content included practical skills as well as “trade English.” Union members who spoke Mandarin or Cantonese were brought in to help with language support. “Not one of the 20 participants was late or missed a session. They were thirsty for knowledge,” says Stevens. “It was amazing, unbelievable.”

Many within the local were somewhat negative about the idea initially. But at the end, there was greater understanding within the union that the course was “salting the mine” for future organizing efforts and helping fellow workers in need.

IBEW now also runs ESL classes at their union hall, reflecting the success of organizing efforts.

Impacts

The course was much appreciated by the participants, and helped many to gain work in the field. The union’s efforts also contributed to the Chinese workers forming the Association of Chinese Electrical Workers, who participated in the Toronto and York Region Labour Council’s Labour Day Parade in 2004.

What’s Next

The Local has followed up its first experiment with renewed attempts to get Ontario Ministry of Citizenship funding to continue the courses, targeted to immigrant workers of several language groups. “Funding is key,” states Barry Stevens. “The government should fund such courses to help immigrants.”

Name of Program: Collège FTQ-Fonds

Central Labour Body: Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ), with its Solidarity Fund

Contact Person: France Laurendeau, Director, flaurendeau@ftq.qc.ca, 514.383.8022

Initial Purpose: To develop the next wave of leadership for the labour movement, capable of influencing the broad transformations under way in Québec's economy and society.

Barriers Addressed: Class, formal education level, and cultural subordination in English-speaking North America. The grassroots orientation of FTQ union education means that full-time union representatives and union staff are provided few programs designed to address their situation and to broaden their perspectives beyond the pressures of immediate work. The Collège addresses this barrier. This population of about 1,500 people is largely white men aged around 45, with high school education, based in Montreal. The participants have reached a group that is younger, more female and more educationally and regionally diverse than the pool on which it draws. In particular, formal education has been a challenge, since participants range from Grade 11 to post-graduate degrees. The international component of the Collège works through "francophonie" (visits by groups of union activists from Francophone Africa) and through "translated guests" (English-speaking resource people from Canada, the U.S., Africa, China, etc.).

Background Information

The FTQ is the largest central labour body in Québec with over 500,000 members, including most unionists in the private sector, construction and municipal public services. Since 1974 it has directed education of its members independent of the Canadian Labour Congress, and has built a network of hundreds of union educators for delivery of courses through its regional councils and affiliates. The Solidarity Fund (*Fonds de solidarité des travailleurs du Québec*) is Canada's largest labour-sponsored investment fund, and the largest source of venture capital in Canada. Its Economic Education Foundation partially sponsors several workplace education initiatives, including the Collège.

How the Program Started

The Collège is a residential 8-week program (five weeks in residence and three weeks at home for readings and working on their project) for union staff and full-time elected officers, which has had over 200 participants in 15 small groups since its founding. When the Solidarity Fund was formed in 1983, the FTQ took on the challenge of influencing the shape of the Quebec economy, not just reacting to changes. Yet the extensive structures of FTQ membership education were focused on emerging activists, while full-time union officers and staff had little educational support for the broader roles now required of them. Throughout the 1990s, discussion of a new college continued, and the first session was held in 2000.

How the Program Evolved

From the start, participants in the Collège have prepared a major strategic action project, based on their own choice of topic that can be applied on a real problematic situation. This process is supported at every stage by individual and collective tutorials. This is consistent with the FTQ worker educator program, which became a generator of knowledge, not just a transmission belt for the thinking of the leadership.

The program alternates popular education approaches, typical of Quebec union education, with academic and corporate tools. University professors and social movement activists were the majority of guests. Most of the readings were academic texts at the beginning; they were replaced over time by more and more « clear language » texts. Role-plays and activity methods are used, but so are formal lectures and the case study methods from the Harvard Business School. The effort of the Collège is to be broad in its sources without compromising its clarity of purpose. As a matter of policy adopted formally by the FTQ executive, participants in the Collège are challenged to reflect on their assumptions, rather than simply reinforced in their current convictions.

From the start, the Collège program included guided visits in the areas where the residential sessions were being held. Much of this was arranged in cooperation with the community organization “L’Autre Montréal.” More recently, two experiments within the framework of the Collège bear specific mention, both concerning outreach beyond the limits of union members.

One initiative addressed issues of globalization and solidarity. A specific initiative was taken to link the Collège to the Worker Education Program of the ILO, based in Turin, Italy. Each year, a group of Francophone unionists from Africa takes part in a four-week training there, for which the last week is intended to be an international visit. In 2004 and 2005, the full group of African guests participated in one of the five residential weeks of the Collège. Informally and formally, they were fully integrated into the learning experience of their Quebec brothers and sisters. The immediate impact on Quebec participants was to surface and confront pre-conceptions about Africa, to put in question long-held assumptions about “normal” union practices, and to provoke greater curiosity about union and political issues in the global South.

A second initiative was begun with group 12 of the Collège in 2005, involving on-site visits to three specific communities. For this purpose, the participants were divided into three sub-groups, one of which was received on an Aboriginal reserve, one by an anti-poverty initiative and the third by an immigrant settlement service. In all three situations, most Collège participants were in a setting quite unfamiliar to them, and were called upon to self-organize in order to maximize the learning possibilities in the short time of a couple of days. The experiences were then discussed in common as part of the Collège program.

In both these initiatives, the group of participants was immersed in a situation where they were not fully in control. This plunge into the unknown was experienced collectively, and was a rich source of informal learning, to complement the formally structured program.

Impacts

This comment gives the flavour of the program's impact on individual participants:

“We can get too caught up in our technical work, and lack the time to think broadly about the labour movement. Yet we're an important link in the union chain. This has restored my energy to push forward, instead of complaining and criticizing all the time. We need to get past a static, mechanical way of working, to keep our militancy, and for that the Collège has been a big help.”

The Collège has already directly involved 10% of the group it addresses, which may be a critical mass in terms of influencing the culture of the FTQ and its affiliated unions.

After discussion with the “academic committee” of the Collège, university equivalencies were calculated for the program, in case participants might seek formal credit for their work. The total turned out to be well over 250 hours of structured study, with 73 hours of theoretical work, 60 hours of practical skill development, 13 hours of historical and workplace visits and 87 hours of independent supervised study.

What's Next

For the FTQ leadership, evaluation is needed to ensure that the considerable investment of money and staff time in the Collège is worth the trouble. After all, an intensive and future-oriented program is bound to cause trouble to the union leadership in the short term. First of all, members and colleagues are likely to complain about the absence of a seasoned union representative for a period of several weeks; further, the participants return to their union with new ideas and skills, which will destabilize their work environment; and finally, a satisfied participant is likely to encourage colleagues to request assignment for future Collège sessions, so that the trouble will be repeated!

The leaders of affiliated unions, who hold the authority to authorize or withhold participation in the Collège, are a key constituency for evaluation, both informal and formal. They are invited to the closing day of the Collège. Over a longer period, it is these ranking officers of affiliated unions who will see the effects of the Collège on the will, skill and knowledge of their representatives.

Further References

The web site (in French) <http://collegeftqfonds.ftq.qc.ca> gives an overview of the program, conditions of participation, the steering committees, a list of all “graduates” by

union and a list of the topics addressed by each person as their “strategic action project” for future action.

In English, an initial sketch of progress to 2002 can be found in France Laurendeau and D’Arcy Martin, “Equipping the Next Wave of Union Leaders: Québec’s Collège FTQ-Fonds,” in *Unions and Learning in a Global Economy: International Perspectives*, ed. Bruce Spencer, Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2002.

M. Blondin, (1997). La formation économique des employés, facteur de changement dans les milieux de travail. In *Gestion, Revue des Hautes Études Commerciales*, 22(3), automne.

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Related Initiative

One program has grown directly from the Collège. It is a « short course » for the FTQ leadership that involves key Collège resource people, run annually since 2001 for a week. It serves to extend the influence of the Collège, and to engage the union leadership as supporters of those who graduate from the Collège program.

Name of Program: Worker-Educator Program: Training Trainers

Central Labour Body: Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ)

Contact Person: Johanne Deschamps, Directrice, Service d'éducation, 514.383.8012, Jdeschamps@ftq.qc.ca

Initial Purpose: Since 1975, when the FTQ took over member education in Quebec from the Canadian Labour Congress, the educational opportunities provided to 500,000 members through labour councils and affiliated unions have been built around a system of training activists as educators. During this generation, more than 3,000 people have been through courses as “member educators” (formateurs/formatrices), whose initial framework was drawn most from popular education, and is now organized around the related idea of experiential education, a process whereby knowledge is created by the transformation of experience.

Barriers Addressed: Class and access by larger numbers of members, especially outside the major urban centres

Background Information

The FTQ is the largest central labour body in Québec with over 500,000 members, including most unionists in the private sector, construction and municipal public services. Quebec unions are relatively strong (40% union density and growing), and live in a kind of healthy competition among three union centrals, of which the FTQ is the largest. Despite the positions of the Charest government at the moment, Quebec's dominant political culture is social-democratic, assuming a strong state, strong public services like health care, and social welfare measures such as strong public subsidies for daycare and parental leave.

How the Program Started

In 1975, the FTQ took over from the CLC in coordinating member education, at a time when few affiliates had full-time education staff and the needs for courses were great. In this situation, those staff in affiliates whose assignment includes education were drawn together into an education committee at the federation level, which develops and provides member education to advance the overall objectives set at conventions. Most courses are designed by a working group of affiliate education officers, led by an FTQ education staff person, and new curriculum is tested and adapted before being widely used. Then, in an initial week-long course, a group of union activists is provided with this tool, as the way to begin a journey as educators. Time after time, they reply « yes » by Friday to the question « Are you ready to educate your fellow workers? » With coaching and specialized refresher courses, this network of grassroots educators has strengthened the knowledge, skills and confidence of a generation of workers.

How the Program Evolved

The bias towards « teacher-centred » adult education practices in the wider society was strongly present in the early years of the program. For example, the public speaking course used to start with communications theory, until it became clear that the theory could best be grasped *after* the practice. Now people are asked to make a presentation of five minutes, without having been provided with theories on the skills of a good speaker. Then their presentations are analyzed together. The theory is built step by step, based on the presentations and the group’s collective analysis. In effect, this replaces the safety net of theory with the safety net of trust. This is more consistent with the popular education principle of starting from people’s lived experience, and with union values of mutual help, solidarity and teamwork.

The FTQ train the trainer program equips activists to lead their peers in learning, based on five key capacities. The first is to understand what it means to work with a group of adults – to start from the group, to trust the group, to make *the group the central focus* of the educational process. For the initial train the trainer, and for subsequent coaching, the FTQ has identified the following key elements of this capacity, and indicators that it has been developed:

CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF A CAPACITY FOR “STARTING FROM THE GROUP”	INDICATORS THAT THE CAPACITY HAS BEEN DEVELOPED
1. Capacity to integrate into and adapt to the group	1.1 Puts the group at ease
	1.2 Establishes a climate of participation among equals
	1.3 Takes into account needs and interests of the group
	1.4 Respects the rhythms of learning
2. Capacity to recognize the validity of other views	2.1 Listens to different opinions
	2.2 Shows empathy
	2.3 Shows that what the person has said is believed
	2.4 Welcomes non-verbal signals and silences as legitimate forms of expression
3. Capacity to establish a positive climate in the group	3.1 Demonstrates active listening and respect
	3.2 Maximizes participation in the group
4. Capacity to guide the group, to analyze, probe and challenge	4.1 Makes links among people/ explains objectives clearly
	4.2 Poses questions that help the group clarify ideas
	4.3 Draws the best from what has been said
	4.4 Turns back the results to the group for further development and enrichment

The other four capacities are: facilitating the group (educational judgment, group dynamics, task effectiveness); co-facilitation; peer learning; putting learning into action.

Impacts

The Education Committee of the FTQ is a tight-knit group of about 20 people, which meets for a full day every couple of months and for an annual two-day retreat. Starting at its 2001 retreat, a thorough review has taken place, grappling with three broad questions around relevance, consistency and effectiveness:

- Do the objectives of our courses actually address the needs of the participants, at the level of knowing, feeling and doing (“savoir, savoir-être and savoir-faire”)?
- How consistent are we between what is written in our manuals and what we actually do in the courses?
- Do our courses actually permit a transfer of learning into the workplace? In other words, do they actually strengthen the union?

As a result of this collective reflection, many changes were made. For example, in the pre-retirement course, the manual was completely re-written. It had not been revised since the early 1980s. Nowadays, participants in this course are much more informed, and approach retirement differently. In many unions, the retirement age has come down significantly because they have negotiated better pension plans; some members have been re-married and still have children at home, and so on. On examination, the manual was somewhat condescending, so the tone was changed, “little tips” were replaced by a reflective approach for each participant to build a retirement project based on their dreams and real situations. At a wider level, one result of this shift is more systematic coaching of worker-educators.

What’s Next

The process of reflection places a greater weight of responsibility on all levels of the “training trainers” system to better align its practices with its vision. Reflection sessions with worker-educators after three years of experience have taken place since 2003. These one-week upgrading sessions start from their practices, by exploring an educational moment that they found difficult. The group probes that experience collectively, in order to bring the experiential approach from theory into critical and collective self-assessment. By writing up the “experiential approach,” the FTQ has entered into critical dialogue with other adult educators in Quebec, and has a consistent basis for intervening in public policy discussions around training and education.

Further References

Derek Briton, Winston Gereluk and Bruce Spencer, *Labour Education in Canada Today*, Athabasca, Alberta: Centre for Work and Community Studies, Athabasca University, 2001.

Johanne Deschamps, “Re-Thinking Union Pedagogy: Aligning real objectives with real practices,” Presentation to the joint education conference of the AFL-CIO and the United Association for Labour Education, Bal Harbour, Florida, April 11, 2003.

Michel Blondin (1980), « Une formation syndicale faite par les travailleurs eux-mêmes, »
Community Development.

FTQ (2006), Programme d'éducation, 2006-2007, at www.ftq.qc.ca.

Name of Program: Equality Initiative

Central Labour Body: Ontario Region, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

Contact Persons: Bill Chedore, Ontario Regional Director, 416.441.3710, bchedore@clc-ctc.ca; Winnie Ng; Karl Flecker, CLC Director, Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department, 613.521.3400 ext 262, kflecker@clc-ctc.ca

Initial Purpose: To increase participation of racialized and young workers as leaders and participants in education programs.

Barriers Addressed: race and age (among others)

Background Information

In the regional structure of Canada's house of labour, the Ontario Region is the largest, with the most diverse racial and cultural membership. The CLC Ontario Region organizes an extensive education program, including week-long courses in an annual Winter School. Initiatives to have the content and process of education respond to the full range of Ontario workers were called for in the 1997 CLC Anti-Racism Task Force Report, "[*Challenging Racism: Going Beyond Recommendations.*](#)"

How the Program Started

The Ontario Region office undertook to broaden the range of courses offered, and to integrate anti-racist content into existing courses. In cooperation with the Education Department of the CLC, new courses were piloted, and a series of activities developed that could be integrated into existing courses. Young activists and activists of colour were identified as co-instructors of more courses, and scholarships were used to assist members from discriminated groups to participate in the week-long courses.

This was undertaken in the early years of the Mike Harris Conservative regime in Ontario, when government initiatives like the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat were being abolished, and the language of racial equality purged from government documents. The efforts of the CLC to sustain and expand equality work were part of a wider effort by the labour movement and its allies to hold onto the dream of economic and social justice in an adverse political climate.

In the mid-90s, the issues emerged whatever the title of a course. In a discussion, someone would refer to immigrants as "they", when recent immigrants were in the room and the speaker was a descendant of immigrants. To take on the issues without breaking solidarity meant a renewed focus on what binds unionists together – class.

How the Program Evolved

The CLC Equality Initiative was undertaken in a political climate where unions were spending huge resources in fighting back against a right-wing agenda, rather than doing more equity training. Some union leaders supported the CLC in targeting different groups, developing diverse leadership for the long term, but often resources were limited. Yet throughout the decade from 1996 to 2006, the changing demographics of the province and of the union membership have put pressure on the traditional habits of the union culture.

Courses offered by the CLC, on topics like workplace harassment, complement those provided by affiliated unions. As a result, participants in CLC courses are often drawn largely from smaller affiliates and from organizations newly affiliated. In recent years, much of the membership growth has come in the teachers' unions (like OSSTF) and in the service sector (like UNITE-HERE), where exposure to other affiliates and their experiences is a great contribution of CLC courses.

Some of the participants are from northern Ontario, and tend to see racism as a problem only in Toronto. In a climate of respect, it emerges that these inequalities affect immigrants, but emerge in the north around Aboriginal peoples. The healing point is when there is a united front against the employers.

When new courses were first offered, enrolment was often low. Participants tended to be people already committed to equality and anti-racism as union values. Among some activists and union leaders, there was also some backlash against the priority placed on such courses. A research project was undertaken, in cooperation with the Centre for the Study of Education and Work, which explored the challenges in this transition. It identified the value of organizational practices beyond the specific course in advancing an equality agenda. In that view, the "activity system" of a course needs to be located inside a set of other systems (the school, the central labour body, the labour movement and the society) for changes to actually be sustained.

These changes are based on the view of racialized union activists that the labour movement's actions can't be limited to pushing the governments for change. What are we doing for the next generation of activists coming in?

Impacts

This work has proceeded in close cooperation with both the national CLC and the labour councils across Ontario. At the CLC level, Aboriginal and workers of colour conferences have been held, and also at the Toronto and York Region Labor Council, which drew more than 400 people to their first such gathering in 2003. Building on that, labour councils were able to involve more of the activists of colour into union campaigns, for example the municipal and other elections. Union education is aimed to action, yet Winnie Ng observes: "with the range of campaigns under way you feel overwhelmed, and some of the equity issues get left out. For example the erosion of Employment

Insurance impacts workers of colour, the racialization of poverty, so these issues are connected, but we need to be much more substantive or concrete in linking.”

What’s Next

Several of the other “innovative practices” described in this report work in close concert with the regional offices of the CLC, and this work is coordinated across Canada by the National Director, Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department, based in Ottawa. Discussion is now under way for a “Solidarity Institute,” an educational program to bring together union activists who face discrimination based on social identity.

In changing the organizational culture of unions, a balance needs to be achieved between mobilizing the people who are targets of discrimination, and building alliances with brothers and sisters who in some sense benefit from inequality. This is slow and often frustrating work. It also requires strategic capacity, to identify opportunities and mobilize support so that the changes that have begun are deepened and the momentum renewed, for the labour movement to build a democratized and multi-racial community that models internally the practices that it calls for in society as a whole.

Further References

On the CLC web site, www.clc-ctc.ca, there are several relevant publications and current statements on equality. See for example, <http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/s42792a5b8468b> .

The study on “The Challenges of Educating for Equality in Unions” can be found at <http://www.wallnetwork.ca/resources/workingpapers.htm> .

The CLC Education Department has available an “Anti-Racism Integration Guide,” widely used in the labour movement to ensure that these issues are kept on the agenda in union education, whatever the specific course title.

Related Initiatives

The human rights work of the CLC addresses these main areas:

- [Anti-racism](#)
- [Aboriginal workers](#)
- [Women](#)
- [Youth](#)
- [Pride](#) (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered)
- [Workers with disabilities](#)
- [Workers of colour](#)

Name of Program: Lead Organizer Training Program, Organizing Institute

Central Labour Body: British Columbia Federation of Labour

Contact Person: John Weir, Director, organize@bcfed.com, 604.430.1421

Initial Purpose: To help train new union organizers, to increase cooperation and coordination in affiliate recruitment organizing activities.

Barriers Addressed: language, gender, race

Background Information

The British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL) is the central labour body in British Columbia, representing 380,000 trade union members. The Organizing Institute was created by the mandate of the 1996 BCFL convention, financed by a three cents per-month per capita increase, existing per capita and program cost recoveries.

How the Program Started

Though higher than in many other provinces (37% in 1996), union density in British Columbia had been in decline since the 1960s. Organizing drives were recouping only half the number of union members lost due to technological change, contracting out, and closures. Inter-union cooperation in union organizing was limited. Although the workforce was becoming more diverse, affiliate organizers were predominantly white males. To support affiliates in recruitment efforts, the BCFL launched the Organizing Institute.

The Institute's training program has four main elements:

- Providing centralized organizer training opportunities
- Developing course materials and training resources for affiliates to use in their internal training programs
- Training instructors to enhance the Institute's and affiliates' training capacity
- Developing placement opportunities for newly trained organizers

The Institute holds periodic educational sessions for organizers, roundtables for senior organizers, hosts an email discussion list for 200 activists, and offers various workshops on supports to organizing. The core program though, is the Lead Organizer Training Program, launched in 1998.

The program design focuses on generic organizing skills, and therefore also develops skills transferable to recruitment, community organizing, and internal union mobilizing. The program objectives include building a cross-union network: interaction and the establishment of personal relations help avoid future inter-affiliate conflict.

Participants are chosen by the affiliates, with the only “pre-requisite” being people who are hopefully capable of meeting the demands of organizing. Most are rank and file activists who may be at a level of going on staff. So as not to create an unnecessary barrier, organizing experience is not emphasized.

The intensive, three-day residential course is offered twice a year to 31 people (and on demand based on affiliate need). The experiential approach attempts to simulate life as an organizer. Role playing is used extensively. Held in a location removed from major centres, participants do not go out on their own. Two 12-hour days are followed by a 7-hour session. Participants “lose control” of their personal time; exercises extend even into directions on who to eat meals with. As John Weir notes, “if you can’t adapt to that, then organizing may not be for you.”

There is a low ratio of students to instructor, as personal coaching is an integral element of the program. There are seven instructors for each course; about four participants work with each instructor. Instructors are selected for their diversity, both in the sectors where they normally organize, and in their personal characteristics. The Institute places a heavy emphasis on language skills – groups may be arranged based on language to facilitate role plays in Punjabi, for example. There is less reliance on written material so as to ensure program effectiveness.

The Institute draws on a pool of 25 instructors, all experienced organizers. There is frequent instructor turnover as organizers burn out, move up, etc. Affiliates are encouraged to identify potential new instructors and each program includes two new instructors so as to expand training capacity.

How the Program Evolved

Much attention is devoted to diversity, in program content, design and structure. Affiliates are encouraged to seek out participants from under-represented groups. Institute-sponsored research helped overcome some initial resistance: organizing campaigns are more successful if the organizers’ personal characteristics are similar to the workers trying to unionize. Now the more common complaint is the difficulty finding people from diverse communities who want to do this type of work.

Women are also encouraged to participate, and are always included in the instructor group. “Women organizers face difficulties juggling the work-life balance,” notes Weir. “There are cultural barriers, different opinions about women’s roles, family attitudes. We talk about these challenges and the pressure on families.”

Impacts

About 700 people have taken the course in the 10 years the program has been offered. The chief gain has been the increase in organizational strength, especially around diversity issues and participation. The most recent training session for example, had only two white men among the seven instructors. “The active, experienced organizers used as

instructors in this session included a Black woman from Ghana, a First Nations woman, a Filipino woman – this reflects reality,” says Weir. “We have really driven this issue within the union organizations. Including more people from diverse groups in union leadership is about commitment to equality and also about union survival.”

The diversified pool of organizers increases the odds of recruitment success. The Organizing Institute’s “hiring hall” invites affiliates to lend staff to other unions to meet particular needs. The ability to match organizers by ethnicity and language with the workers being organized has had a significant impact in organizing drives.

Organizers help beyond recruitment, being called on to help with employer attempts to decertify, and to re-organize workers contracted out through B.C. government cuts and policy decisions. “Health care has been a battleground,” Weir points out. “The government has taken away successor rights, and unions are fighting employer deals with ‘rat unions’ like the Christian Labour Association. In many health care workplaces, the majority of workers are immigrants, 90% women of colour. The Organizing Institute helped the Hospital Employees Union, with high success rates despite the odds. Though the workers had no conventional bargaining power, they were resilient, kept on fighting.”

For the Organizing Institute’s program and services as a whole, impacts are varied. Although new members and certifications have not risen (due to a variety of factors), more Federation affiliates have introduced or expanded organizing programs. The culture of organizing has changed, with mutual support and information sharing between affiliates and organizers. This has helped reduce the frequency and severity of organizing disputes between unions in British Columbia.

What’s Next

The spring 2006 strategic planning session of the Organizing Institute identified seven organizing priorities. The major area of focus for the next three years will be to make advances in the growing Chinese immigrant community. 97% of Chinese immigrants live in the Lower Mainland. Most of the job growth is in urban areas, with concentration in hospitality, manufacturing, and health care among women workers.

The labour movement faces a difficult challenge. The language barrier is significant. There is a level of community insularity, and problems have been encountered in identifying progressive community groups. Addressing training opportunities in these communities will make unions more attractive, the Organizing Institute feels. Unions’ successes in the Filipino and Indo-Canadian communities will no doubt strengthen their resolve.

Further References

John Weir, “Increasing Inter-Union Co-operation and Co-ordination: The BC Federation of Labour Organizing Institute”, in Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, eds., *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, 2006.

Name of Program: Solidarity and Pride

Unions and Central Labour Bodies: various

Contact Person: Sue Genge, National Representative (staff for the CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group), 613.521.3400 ext. 281, sgenge@clc-ctc.ca

Barriers Addressed: heterosexism, homophobia, LGBT issues (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered)

Background Information

This report has not intended to provide an inventory of union courses offered on equity issues. Virtually all unions offer anti-racism courses, human rights courses, courses and workshops on women's issues, etc. However, LGBT issues are a relatively recent addition. In this sketch we offer a small glimpse of how union work in this area is evolving, with a few examples drawn from labour education. The sketch is based on conversations between the project research team and staff from a number of unions and central labour bodies.

How the Program Started

Labour's work initially focused on encouraging self-organizing among gays and lesbians. Regional and national caucuses, working groups and committees (now constitutionally mandated in several unions) are all examples of the forms of self-organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered workers within the union movement. Several unions and central labour bodies also have designated LGBT positions in their executive/leadership bodies.

The CLC Solidarity and Pride Working Group, for example, was established as a result of policy papers passed by the 1994 CLC convention. Generally, such bodies play several roles including:

- making decisions and recommendations for actions, campaigns, policy and political issues at the respective level within the union or central labour body
- initiating Pride conferences, educational courses and workshops on LGBT issues

Before and after constitutional challenges and victories, unions have bargained for same sex benefits, protective and other clauses. For example, in 1989 following the Mossop decision, the Public Service Alliance of Canada proposed to the federal Treasury Board that the definition of spouse in the Master Agreement be changed to include same sex spouses. The Yukon Government was the first government in Canada to negotiate such a clause (1990).

Among the earliest initiatives unions undertake within the membership as a whole are bargaining demands, as well as awareness campaigns, particularly for "safe space" – in the workplace and in the union.

How the Program Is Evolving

Canadian Union of Public Employees: Pioneers in Pride Education

Located within CUPE's national structure, the union's Pink Triangle Committee began its work in 1991. A convention resolution in the same year directed the development of internal education on heterosexism and homophobia. The Committee became directly involved in course development, working with the Union Development Department whose responsibilities include union education (a parallel process took place in Quebec).

The process itself was innovative and set several precedents which later spread to other areas of union education. Until this time, courses had been prepared by staff course writers, sometimes in consultation with leaders and staff in other departments. For the first time, a member sub-committee (of lesbian and gay members) worked together with course writers. It is now routine to involve front-line members in course development.

The union decided to target the course to members generally, to help explain:

- forms of discrimination against gays and lesbians
- how discrimination operates
- why unions had to defend members who suffered from employer discrimination
- how to defend members: as a steward, health and safety person, union executive member

In other words, to explain why heterosexism and homophobia are union issues. Topics were tied in with the union's bargaining agenda, for example on same sex benefits.

There was a lot of debate around what members needed to know, and what they would tolerate. Using adult education techniques and clear language, the course developers addressed expected member discomfort around these issues by the inclusion of fun and funny exercises, in a positive way.

Entitled "Pride in CUPE," the one and a half day course includes a powerful exercise on language. Using familiar, hateful names that slur lesbians and gays, including some words from other cultures and countries, the course reminds members of their own experience with such name-calling. Participants are honest about what these words mean to us; sometimes stories they share are quite embarrassing. The course makes the links with similar language around women. The exercise shows the power of language, the power of speech.

In another innovative move, the union agreed that course facilitators had to be lesbian or gay members. Members would have questions in the course, and trainers needed to be able to answer these questions. The course was also seen as an opportunity for members to talk to members.

While many in the union had promoted starting a practice of member facilitation, Pride in CUPE was the first example that it could be done. Gender identity politics was the way to make it happen, but once it happened it became a model. The Member Facilitator Program is now over a decade old. All CUPE courses (which are always co-facilitated) include member facilitators. Often both facilitators are members, all of whom must have taken the union's facilitator training plus the course they will facilitate. Facilitators for Pride in CUPE must be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered members or staff, and participate in specific course training offered in retreat session. This provides the needed opportunity for mutual support as personal experiences so often intertwine with the training session.

For the first training, about 25 activists from across the country were recruited (at least one from each province). Participants discussed possible responses to difficult questions, tried out various activities, and helped to improve the course.

The course was piloted and offered a few times in Ontario. In its early offerings, only queer members participated (not by design). The course helped build networks, helped bring queer members closer to the union, increased participation in union activities. Course discussions enriched understanding of differences in heterosexism between gays and lesbians, links to racism, etc. However, the course was not yet fulfilling its goal of reaching the general membership.

Thus, the next hurdle was to offer the course as part of the regular CUPE school calendar. Practice in the union is for the national Union Development Department to offer a list of courses, from which provincial and district council education committees request those courses they wish to include in their regional schools. There was a lot of pressure at the base to provide tool courses such as stewards training, how to chair a meeting, health and safety, financial officer training.

Given the initial lack of response, in the mid to late 90s the promoters of the course encouraged people to put forward resolutions at provincial conventions directing provincial leadership to take the course. This too was precedent-setting: CUPE's union culture includes strong notions about autonomy, which can breed resistance to anyone telling anyone else what to do.

Nonetheless, some leaders came forward to speak in favour of the resolution which then passed. The provincial executive board in Ontario was the first leadership body to take the training (1998). This encouraged other places to participate, for example, the leadership in Newfoundland requested to be trained. In turn, word of mouth helped spread the experience throughout the union and across the country.

For example, an Ontario executive board member from Thunder Bay was a leader with the local of outside city workers. Her praise of the course based on her direct experience helped convince her local executive to take the training, and then the region to put on the school. Soon the course was reaching its intended audience. There was a flurry of activity in the late 90s and early 2000s as locals and area councils sponsored course offerings.

Course content is always evolving: for example, there is now a module on bisexuality, and the course is inclusive of transgendered issues. Material today could support a week-long course, but book-off costs are too much of a challenge. Half-day course modules providing basic knowledge and tools are frequently integrated into other union courses as needed.

From the heyday of the late 90s and early 2000s, requests for the course have declined somewhat. New members, new locals again stress union basics, tool courses. A similar experience has been seen with courses on other equality issues.

However, there continues to be a huge number of requests for the union's course on harassment in the workplace, which is inclusive of LGBT and other equality areas. Thousands of members have taken the 1 to 1.5 day course on work time. The course is offered free to employers by the union, and is often part of resolutions of harassment-related grievances.

At the end of this workplace course, the facilitator promotes CUPE's Union Development courses. Reviewing the list, the facilitator notes that if there are at least 15 people in the local union who will participate in a particular course, the Union Development Department will deliver at no cost to the local. The number one response on these occasions is often "Pride in CUPE." Members clearly state the continued need for the course.

Other union experiences

Courses and workshops focused on LGBT issues are offered by many unions. In some regions, they are more likely to be offered by central labour bodies, enabling the participation of members from smaller unions (who may not have such opportunities within their own union). A few examples:

- For several years the Prairie School for Union Women has offered a course called Inside and Out, which challenges barriers of homophobia and heterosexism. The course is open to women who come from any sexual orientation.
- The Alberta Federation of Labour is holding its first one-day workshop on these issues in October 2006. Entitled "Queer for Dummies: The ABCs of the GLBT," the workshop will be held at the Pride Centre of Edmonton as part of strengthening connections with the community. The educational workshop is open to trade unionists, social partners and community activists. As part of its discussion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues within the labour movement, the workshop plans to:
 - educate on our history and on how to create a safe space through contract language, non-discrimination and education
 - seek to create allies in the labour movement
 - educate on the hurdles that the GLBT community faces at work; be it harassment, discrimination or wrongful termination

- The Canadian Auto Workers offers a one-day course at area schools, *Confronting Homophobia*. The course is also delivered on request, for example to local leadership,

Within union education, course developers ensure the inclusion in a range of labour education courses of scenarios, language, etc. relevant to LGBT issues. Human rights courses and forums as well as anti-harassment workshops and courses all usually include LGBT issues.

Some examples:

- the Public Service Alliance of Canada includes case studies involving heterosexism and homophobia in their union's kits on Duty to Accommodate and for Local Officers. Leadership development programs include tools to deal with systemic and cultural (workplace culture and union culture) exclusions and homophobia.
- All tools courses offered by the Canadian Auto Workers include human rights components (such as scenarios), for example in courses on grievance handling, collective bargaining, for women leadership and activists.
- The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario includes LGBT issues as part of steward training (member rights and responsibilities).

Facilitator training often includes how to deal with homophobia and heterosexism in the classroom. Unions also produce educational resource materials, such as:

- The Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of B.C. is just beginning awareness work on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered issues. The federation has put together a resource binder to assist locals with networking and information. It contains information about various union pride organizations – their history, activities and accomplishments in networking, lobbying, organizing and negotiating; web links to a broad range of research sources on LGBT issues; and articles of interest covering a range of LGBT topics, among them coming out/living out issues, issues specific to youth, parenting and family issues, issues of intersectionality, issues specific to living in rural communities, LGBT legal equality struggles, hate crime and the disproportionate disadvantage of the transgendered. There is a section dealing with resources within college sector organizations, on resources of other unions, a third with resources from national organizations and a fourth listing some general education research web links and articles.
- The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario has published a curriculum resource for classroom teachers (kindergarten to Grade 8): *Imagine a World that is Free from Fear* (2004). Using stories, the anti-bullying curriculum specifically addresses heterosexism and homophobia and is tied to the Ontario curriculum. ETFO provides professional development workshops based on the resource; thus far over 30 sessions have been held across the province. There are accompanying pamphlets, bookmarks, and a poster.

Many unions also link with community. For example, ETFO provides online resources across the province, and sends a Pride kit to its locals annually.

Further References

See the Pride section of the Canadian Labour Congress website:

http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/pride_sol

See websites of unions and other central labour bodies (access through “Links” on the CLC site).

Name of Program: Youth Internship Program

Union: United Food and Commercial Workers Canada (UFCW)

Contact Person: Chris O'Halloran, National Youth Coordinator, 416.675.1104 ext. 268, cohalloran@ufcw.ca

Initial Purpose: To get young members more involved in the union; to train future labour activists, union representatives and organizers.

Barriers Addressed: age, gender

Background Information

The United Food and Commercial Workers Canada represents over 240,000 workers across the country. Members are employed in food and retail, as well as in the manufacturing and service sectors. More than 40% of UFCW Canada's membership is under the age of 30.

How the Program Started

The United Food and Commercial Workers Canada began the Youth Internship Program (YIP) in 2000. The program was launched in order to deal with the lack of youth in elected and staff positions within the union. Despite their large numbers, youth were under-represented in elected, staff, and leadership positions within the union. When Michael Fraser became the national director of UFCW Canada he brought a focus on youth oriented programming that he had implemented while president of Local 175 to the national union to address the lack of youth in leadership positions. One of the outcomes of a focus on youth issues within UFCW Canada was the YIP.

Each year there are 12-15 participants. The program is four weeks long and is divided into three sessions. The YIP is all about building skills and providing opportunities to use them.

Chris O'Halloran (now Youth Coordinator for UFCW Canada) participated in the first YIP. He recognizes that after the first session participants will be full of "piss and vinegar" and wanting to make an immediate impact on their local. To help them do this they meet with members of the National Youth Committee who mentor and femtor the participants about the difficulties they will face when dealing with union structures. This does not discourage participants. It equips them with contacts and strategies for change.

How the Program Evolved

O'Halloran notes that there has been a shift in the last three years from job shadowing union representatives, to focusing on organizing in the second session of the program. According to O'Halloran, "the focus on organizing allows participants an opportunity to

engage in an important union activity during the program and immediately after they are finished the program.” Organizing skills are helpful in all areas of union work so there are many benefits to working on existing organizing drives within the YIP program.

One result of the evaluation process of the first run of the YIP was the recognition that equity was important, particularly as youth can face more than one systemic barrier to their participation in the union. After this recognition there was the inclusion of workshops in the program that dealt with white male privilege. However, it became apparent that single workshops were not going to effectively address the wide range of systemic barriers that face the diversity of young workers.

This realization meant program designers needed to integrate equity into all areas of the educational activities in the program. This allows participants to address equity concerns in the practical segments of the program. The focus on equity has led to changes in the selection process. Each local gets to submit the names of three participants for the program. Now one of those candidates must be a woman, and a second candidate must be from another equity seeking group.

This focus on the realities facing different young members works well with the popular education framework of the YIP’s educational components. Popular education challenges power imbalances within the workplace, the community, and at home. Participants build skills and knowledge through workshops that start with their experiences and use those to examine and critique processes both big picture, such as Globalization and Wal-Mart’s effect on unions and members, and local, such as how a grievance process works.

The effect of the big on the small, and what the small means for the big, is dealt with not solely through workshops. YIP participants also meet with organizations such as the Canadian Labour Congress and the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois. Participants get a chance to hear about what progressive organizations do to address major issues through campaigns and organizing.

Impacts

Getting people acquainted with the logistics of being part of an organization gets them ready for working with their local, or a community social justice organization, after the program is over. The YIP has seen real success in this regard. According to O’Halloran there are now 18 UFCW Canada full time staff who have gone through the YIP program. The Talking Union program is carried out largely by YIP graduates who make presentations to young workers and students about their rights in the workplace and their right to organize. The Special Projects Union Representative (SPUR) program has seen many YIP graduates work on union organizing drives for UFCW Canada locals.

O’Halloran points out the benefits of the program have spread into the organization itself, as well as the community: “we have YIP graduates organizing young workers in organizing drives. We have YIP graduates educating young workers through the Talking

Union program. This program allows participants and our union to make a real impact on the lives of young workers who are not unionized.” O’Halloran argues that the program has helped the union “walk the walk” as far as increasing access to power in the union for young workers.

O’Halloran makes very clear that one of the reasons the program has been so successful is that it has been given time to develop. Originally cost was a concern, and the national union then decided to absorb all the costs of the program. The national union recognizes that once a participant finishes the program it will probably take a couple of years for them to integrate themselves into their local unions. Participants are supported to get involved with their locals, en route to other important leadership positions throughout the local and the union as a whole. This takes time, but the results show that it is worth it.

Recently two local presidents gave up their seats on UFCW Canada’s national council for young workers. Youth committees and youth executive representation are now widespread within UFCW Canada’s locals. There have been three regional youth conferences for UFCW Canada over the last three years. O’Halloran points out that there is a long way to go; “some people get it and some people don’t.” The YIP is doing its part to make sure that if people don’t get it, there are a lot of young members who can organize and get it themselves.

Further References

Anna Liu and Christopher O’Halloran, “Mobilizing Young People: A Case Study of UFCW Canada Youth Programs and Initiatives”, in Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, eds., *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, 2006.

See the youth page on the UFCW Canada website: ufcw.ca

Name of Program: Solidarity Works (SW)

Central Labour Body: Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL)

Contact Person: Larry Hubich, SFL President, sfl.hubich@sasktel.net, 306.525.0197

Initial Purpose: To increase youth participation in the labour movement, to provide youth an opportunity to participate in labour education and activist skill development.

Barriers Addressed: age

Background Information

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is the central labour body in that province. The SFL represents over 93,500 members, from 35 national and international unions.

How the Program Started

Natasha Goudar, former SFL youth organizer who facilitated each run of Solidarity Works in Saskatchewan points out that SW grew out of a “push to get young workers involved with the labour movement.”

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) was where SW started. The CLC provides seed funding to one provincial federation of labour a year to run the program. It is then the responsibility of the federation to fund the program after that. Solidarity Works was started by Nrinder Nindy Kaur Nann, the CLC’s first national representative on youth issues (hired in 1998). An article in the labour magazine *Our Times* on her new job states: “it became clear the the CLC needed a national representative on youth issues when it held a conference [in 1998] addressing youth and only one person under 30 was in the room.”¹⁷

Due to the focus on youth, and the fact that SW is delivered by central labour bodies, the program incorporated some innovations that are not seen in most labour education. Not all of SW’s participants are unionized, allowing the program to involve non-union youth who are interested in unions.

SW content addresses power imbalances in the workplace, but it does not stop there. Racism, sexism, class oppression and colonialism are examined as processes and practices that have framed Canadian history and formed today’s local, national, and international situation, as well as each of us personally. Through popular education workshops and placement opportunities, participants are able to apply their learning through discussion and action.

¹⁷ O’Brien, Jan, “In your face: CLC’s new national youth rep,” *Our Times*, vol. 17, no. 4, July/Aug 1998, p. 14. This document was gathered through proquest. The quote is on p. 2 of the printout of the article.

A residential education program, SW takes place in settings where participants stay in the same building, eat meals together, and have spaces to socialize outside of workshops and other sessions. This helps to build community among participants. Creating this community allows participants and facilitators the opportunity to examine a wide array of injustices and struggles for social justice, within an analytical framework that challenges racism, sexism, classism, ageism, ableism, and heterosexism.

How the Program Evolved

Natasha Goudar points out that one of the key innovations of SW in Saskatchewan was a “turn to organizing” because “young workers are over-represented in the service sector, specifically food service, and that is a sector where unions are under-represented.” This led to a simulated organizing drive in the 2003 run of SW that allowed participants to build organizing skills.

In 2004 the organizing drive was replaced by a popular education facilitation training session. According to Nick Bonokoski, who facilitated and coordinated SW that year, the change happened “because participants got so excited about popular education during the program that we wanted to show them that they could do it themselves outside of SW.”

These two program innovations were attempts to work towards ways to involve the participants in organizing, and stay involved with each other, once the program was over.

Impacts

The first three youth vice presidents of the SFL were graduates of SW. Over 40 participants have a greater understanding of social justice, unions and anti-oppression than they did before participating in SW. Natasha Goudar argues that one of the most important impacts of SW is that “it has built some important long term relationships between people.” Some graduates have gone on to take up elected and/or staff positions with unions or central labour bodies, or elected positions within their locals.

What’s Next

2004 saw the most recent run of SW in Saskatchewan. This was also the last year there was a young person on SFL staff specifically assigned to the delivery of the Solidarity Works program. But thanks to SW there are a lot of young people in Saskatchewan who have skills, resources, and contacts to make meaningful changes in their locals and unions, in their communities, and in themselves.

Further References

See the CLC website: www.canadianlabour.ca/index.php/solidarity_works

“Solidarity Works in Nova Scotia: A Roundtable,” *Our Times* (December 2004 – January 2005), www.ourtimes.ca/features/04_dec_05_jan.html

Name of Program: Prairie School for Union Women (PSUW)

Central Labour Body: Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and the PSUW Committee

Contact Person: Cara Banks, SFL Ready for Work Coordinator, sfl.rfw@sasktel.net, 306.525.0197

Initial Purpose: to improve women's access and participation in labour education; to develop women's personal and leadership skills; to build solidarity among women workers

Barriers Addressed: gender

Background Information

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is the central labour body in that province. The SFL represents over 93,500 members, from 35 national and international unions.

How the Program Started

The Prairie School for Union Women started in 1996. It was first organized by a group of union women volunteering their time; that is how it continues to be organized. Cara Banks, who works at the SFL and has been involved with PSUW for many years, says simply: "there were not enough women going to [union] schools." She argues that the PSUW was "a response to the need for an educational space where women could learn and feel safe." The decision for a women's school addressed barriers of women not participating as much in rooms where men are present, and the fact that women participants in the usual union education environments often had to deal with harassment.

The four-day school offers a wide variety of courses. The 10 courses offered in 2006, for example, included topics from health and safety to popular education for everyday union work, to Wal-mart and greening your workplace. The school provides on-site child care to improve possibilities for women's participation.

How the Program Evolved

A few years into the school's history, the organizers decided that all courses would be designed and facilitated using popular education. The focus of popular education is on building from people's experiences so the knowledge 'in the room' is respected. This is seen as the starting point for making change in organizations, and in people themselves. Popular education is a form of education that challenges inequitable power relationships outside of classrooms by addressing problems within classrooms.

PSUW was at the forefront of the move to popular education within the labour movement in the Prairies. For seven years there has been a facilitator training that accompanies PSUW so people can learn popular education design and delivery techniques. The

SFL/CLC spring school also now participates in this training, which is contributing to the further reach of popular education approaches.

In the school's early years, participants were not as racially diverse as hoped. The PSUW organizing committee addressed this partly through a scholarship program for equity-seeking members including women of colour (but also for non-union and unemployed women). The CLC anti-racism education integration guide has been used by the school and facilitators. This year one-third of facilitators and participants at the school were women of colour and Aboriginal women. The committee feels that moving towards a policy that ensures equitable participation of racialized groups is a needed step for ongoing improvements.

There is also a move to ensure that the school is not simply designed for women, but that there is a feminist analysis in all courses. In addition, there is now a feeling that "if it doesn't address class it isn't good enough" among the organizing committee. As a result, some policies and course changes have been taken up to address racial equity, feminism, and class consciousness within PSUW.

A mentoring program has "really taken off in the last couple of years." Adrienne Paavo has been working on the mentorship program. She notes that "the program is designed to increase the number of trade union women who are facilitators." While there was a popular education course and facilitator training offered every year, it was felt this was not enough preparation. The mentorship program also enables apprentices to learn how the school itself is organized and to get involved in the PSUW as a whole. While all participants in this year's mentorship program took classroom facilitation placements, the program is designed to ensure that people learn how to use the popular education framework to challenge unequal power relationships outside as well as inside classrooms.

A course that was offered for the first time in 2006 is indicative of this direction. "Popular Education for Everyday Union Work" was facilitated by Barb Thomas and Darla Leard. This course and the mentorship program show how the PSUW is intent on expanding how people can use learning and education to change their organizations, not simply through classroom education, but through looking at everyday organizational places where learning takes place.

Impacts

The 10 years of the PSUW have had significant impacts on the labour movement in the prairies, and certainly in Saskatchewan. Cara Banks points out that PSUW "puts pressure on the rest of the labour movement" through delivering class conscious feminist popular education to a large number of women every year. The school has seen participants become involved in all levels of union activities, both as elected, and as staff officials.

The impact of the school can be seen in the growing number of women at convention mikes taking stands for feminist issues. Participants often use information and knowledge they have gained at the Prairie School to advance women's issues within their union. The

school has given the women's movement within the labour movement a place where it can have and make community.

What's Next

The PSUW is changing in many positive ways. The move towards a feminist, class conscious, anti-racist school, and women's movement, in the labour movement is exciting for the unions and for workers.

Further References

SFL website page: www.sfl.sk.ca/schools.php

Name of Program: Paid Education Leave Program

Union: Canadian Auto Workers

Contact Person: Rick Rose, Director of Education, 416.497.4110, Rick.Rose@caw.ca

Initial Purpose: To encourage members to develop a broad understanding of the role of the union and themselves as members, to develop activists and social justice advocates.

Barriers Addressed: race, class, gender in an anti-oppression framework

Background Information

The CAW is the largest private sector union in Canada with over 285,000 members across the country. Members work in a diverse range of sectors including auto, auto parts, general manufacturing, fisheries, hospitality and gaming, mining, retail and health care.

How the Program Started

First bargained in 1977 at an auto parts company, the Paid Education Leave (PEL) program is financed by employer contributions based on cents per hour worked (or, in some cases, annual lump sum payments). Negotiated with the Big 3 automakers in 1979, 2005 funding from those employers equaled seven cents per hour worked; far less is contributed by smaller enterprises. 73% of CAW members are in units where PEL has been bargained. PEL funds travel, accommodations and lost wages for participants in one, two and four week residential education programs. A subsidy program is available to help smaller locals or workplaces to increase participant diversity.

The four week Paid Education Leave program is held at the CAW Family Education Centre in Port Elgin, Ontario. Many CAW leaders and staff credit the four week program as being fundamental to their union experience, providing them with the analytical tools, skills and confidence to become social justice and union leaders.

How the Program Evolved

Offered over a four-month period (one week per month), the program focuses on a number of key themes: the union, the workplace, the economy, politics and human rights.

The union: Unions exist to provide a counter-balance to management's role in the workplace and to push for change in broader society. In PEL, participants look at how unions are built (in the past as well as today), and what kind of differences unions can make in working people's lives. Participants talk about the fundamental need for democracy in unions, and in turn how unions can play a role in democratizing the workplace and broader society. The sessions look at key trade union struggles, analyzing both successes and failures, and debate the key challenges facing unions today.

The workplace: Workers sell their labour – what does this mean for each person, what do workers have in common, and what are some of the interesting differences in their experiences? What role does work play in our lives, and how do we feel about it? What is changing about the nature of work, and what drives those changes? How do we evaluate what goes on in our workplaces, and what can we do (in the short term and the long term) to make workplace changes that better our lives and society?

The economy: Workers play a key role in the economy, and yet their voices are seldom heard in decision-making. They are often made to feel as if they are not relevant to economic policies that critically affect their everyday lives. This session covers a lot of economic basics – how the capitalist economy works (and how it doesn't work!) – and why. Participants examine alternative economic models (both historical and international), and debate their strengths and weaknesses. The session looks at how the economy is shaped by the global economy, and examines the implications of a globalized economy on workers in Canada and around the world.

Politics: What role should workers and their unions play in politics? What kind of policies, systems and structures would benefit all working people? What role can unions play in effecting political change in the immediate and in the long-term? What are some interesting examples of workers taking political power here and abroad? What can we learn from this? What kind of society do we want to build, and what are the different schools of thought on how to do this?

Human rights: Racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination divide us as workers. This session takes a hard look at how systems of oppression operate, and what this means for each of us. Through videos, guest speakers, and challenging conversations, participants talk about what it means to build real equality among and between working people, and how union workers can use their collective power to push for broader social justice.

The PEL program builds skills:

- Communication (listening, debating, public speaking)
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Union-building (experience with meetings, committees, mock conventions)
- Community-building (each participant takes on an 'activist project' during the program)
- Research (internet, interviews, media)

Using union-trained peer Discussion Leaders, active learning is central to the PEL program. Participants are engaged in discussion, working in pairs, in small groups, and in large plenaries. The program uses film and video, guest speakers, project work, case studies, media studies, art and culture to engage participants with each other. Key to learning is building a respectful learning environment, building on each worker's

knowledge and understanding and expanding everyone's confidence. Past participants describe their classroom experience as "fun, engaging, tough, exciting, and empowering."

In the mid-90s, CAW added several one-week programs funded by PEL to increase educational opportunities for members. Topics range from grievance handling to collective bargaining, health and safety to WCB, human rights to globalization, building activism, and the environment.

In addition, PEL includes a women's leadership program. First offered as a two week program in the early 1990s, the program was broken into two one-week programs in 2002. Since then, participation has increased significantly. A two-week Workers of Colour/Aboriginal leadership program continues to be successful.

Since 1989, the one and four week PEL programs at Port Elgin have provided rank and file education for over 16,000 members. Despite this success, the union is always concerned about increasing opportunities for member participation. Newer, smaller locals do not have enough money in their PEL fund for the four week program, so usually participate in the one week program. The national union looks at ways to subsidize participation to reduce the cost barrier. As well, the union would like to increase diversity among participants: geographic, sectoral, age, gender, race, etc. The union encourages its locals to address these areas in their selection process.

Program content is also refreshed and revised, most recently in the fall of 2005, with the participation of 26 Discussion Leaders (the PEL trainers).

Impacts

Participants leave the four-week program with a strong commitment to building a better world for workers in Canada and around the world. Their passion for social justice grows, their confidence is nourished, and their understanding of the lives of working people deepens.

In a recent review of CAW education programs by Bob White and Jane Armstrong, the report notes: "Spoken with a unanimous voice, those involved in PEL describe it as 'transforming', 'changing me for life', and 'fundamental to our union.' ...It is astonishing to know that four weeks of education can create life-long activists... Local union leadership and national staff with whom we spoke estimate 80% to 85% of the four-week PEL graduates remain life-long activists." 70-75% of Quebec Council delegates are PEL graduates.

What's Next

In April 2006, Bob White and Jane Armstrong completed a review of CAW education programs. Still under discussion, their draft report is entitled: "CAW Union Education: Shaping 'Time,' The Challenge of Change." The union, the report suggests, is at a

crossroad, “where significant demographic, economic and social changes are intersecting with our union’s education program.”

Demographic changes within the union over the last 20 years have been dramatic. The membership has doubled. Composition has changed: from 89% of members in manufacturing in 1985, to 53% in 2005; from 80% of members in Ontario to 64%. In 2005, 94% of dues-paying units had less than 500 members (just under 50% of CAW membership); only 28 units have more than 1000 members, concentrated in auto and auto parts and transportation. There is a growing proportion of members who are women and workers of colour.

In the last few years, there has been a drop in the number of participants in the four-week PEL program (almost by half). The report notes that the time commitment has become a bigger issue, due to child and elder care, as well as the increased number of members who work irregular shifts or who have more than one part-time job. Workers of colour, Aboriginal workers, and recent immigrants are under-represented in PEL: it is difficult for workers to attend “alone”; education in English may seem intimidating; and these members are particularly affected by small workplace unit size and the part-time nature of a growing number of jobs.

The report notes: “If we had to identify two themes with respect to the dialogue about PEL, they would be the value of the program to building union activists and the concern about the issues of ‘time commitment’ and economics affecting attracting participants to the 4-week program.”

In the period ahead, the CAW will be considering the report’s recommendations as well as reviewing the experiences from the 2005 program revision.

Further References

“Union Education and Training”, CAW 20th Anniversary Collective Bargaining Convention, 2005:

<http://www.caw.ca/whatwedo/bargaining/cbpac/pdf/Chapter13.pdf>

Bob White and Jane Armstrong, April 2006, “Draft. CAW Union Education: Shaping ‘Time,’ The Challenge of Change.”

Johanna Weststar, “Union Education, Union Leadership and Union Renewal: The Role of PEL”, in Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, eds., *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, 2006.

Name of Program: Canadian Auto Workers / McMaster University Labour Studies Certificate Program

Union: Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)

Contact Person: David Robertson, Director of Work Organization and Training, cawwork@caw.ca, 416.495.3761

Initial Purpose: To increase access to post-secondary education; to increase use of the negotiated tuition assistance benefit; to offer a customized labour education certificate that expands social consciousness in partnership with a post-secondary institution (McMaster University).

Barriers Addressed: lack of access to post-secondary education; shift schedules; distance; approach to learning

Background Information

The CAW is the largest private sector union in Canada with over 285,000 members across the country. Members work in a diverse range of sectors including auto, auto parts, general manufacturing, fisheries, hospitality and gaming, mining, retail and health care. The Canadian Auto Workers / McMaster University Labour Studies Certificate Program is available for the over 42,000 members employed by the “Big 3” automakers (General Motors, Daimler-Chrysler and Ford), as well as members employed by CAMI.

How the Program Started

The CAW/McMaster Labour Studies Certificate program (LSC) started in 2000. A number of collective agreements included a tuition assistance program that enabled employees to be reimbursed by the employer for approved work-related courses taken and passed at educational institutions. However, as noted by David Robertson, “Very few members were using the program, and post-secondary institutions were not very accommodating to the reality of work and shifts.”

The union also had many graduates of the Paid Education Leave (PEL) program who had been “turned on to education. They wanted to continue. PEL had opened up a whole new world to them.”

Against this background, CAW sat down with the Labour Studies Department at McMaster University, determined to develop a new program. Today, any course developed through the LSC program is automatically deemed acceptable for cost reimbursement by the employer. In fact, the employer pays tuition upfront through direct billing (as opposed to the usual administrative hassle of a refund after passing).

Courses are delivered after hours, but on a schedule that takes account of rotating shifts. They are held locally at the union hall or office.

How the Program Evolved

About 250 members are currently involved in the program, usually a three-year commitment. Currently the negotiated tuition assistance stands at \$3250 per year.

The LSC program is an education model that builds on the strengths of adult education, union education, popular education and labour studies. “Hopefully we avoid their weaknesses,” adds Robertson. Courses are structured to feature group work, a range of readings, videos, discussions, and lectures to accommodate workers’ varied learning styles.

An interesting innovation is the use of video conferencing, linking five or six locations simultaneously. Facilities for such a technique exist at all CAW regional offices. A specialized current events course, for example, uses video to bring in live speakers from around the world. The topical course focuses on whatever is breaking in the news. A 2006 course examined Canada’s foreign policy, including Haiti and Afghanistan.

The video conferencing template includes a central moderator and discussion leader in each location. A 20-minute lecture by the guest speaker is followed by a break and discussion locally, facilitated by the local discussion leader. After that there is an interactive question-and-answer period with the speaker, followed by a short lecture by the speaker and wrap-up.

The LSC program tries to use technology in an appropriate way for union education purposes (traditional online and correspondence courses were not successful). The union does not want technology to substitute for face to face discussion. They challenge the notion popular within employer approaches that sees everything computer-based as positive. The program recognizes how workers learn while at the same time using technology to do things they couldn’t otherwise do.

A worker who has graduated from the LSC program is given a half-year credit in any degree discipline if they are subsequently accepted in a university degree program at McMaster, Athabasca or Windsor universities.

Impacts

The program’s second graduating class – 50 workers – was celebrated in June 2006. The program has accomplished its goal of increased member use of the tuition assistance benefit. In the process, a unique learning opportunity has been provided for the participants, both union activists and members new to union education.

What’s Next

The LSC program is always developing new courses, designed by union course developers. Because people who have finished the program want to continue, the CAW and McMaster are now looking at an advanced certificate.

Further References

See the program website: <http://socserv.socsci.mcmaster.ca/labourstudies/cawmac/>

“Union Education and Training”, CAW 20th Anniversary Collective Bargaining Convention, 2005:

<http://www.caw.ca/whatwedo/bargaining/cbpac/pdf/Chapter13.pdf>

Name of Program: Mentorship Program

Union: Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP)

Contact Person: Bob Hatfield, Education Director, 613.230.5800 ext 233,
rhatfield@cep.ca

Initial Purpose: To increase activism, develop the next wave of union leadership, and increase the scope of learning and action accessible to younger members and members of equity-seeking groups.

Barriers Addressed: barriers encountered by young members and equity-seeking activists

Background Information

The CEP is a national union whose 150,000 members are spread across the country. Members work in telecommunications, in oil and electrical energy, in paper mills, in print and television media, and other sectors of the economy. The union's education program is well-developed, but like most unions involves only a minority of activists in structured courses. For some years, people had discussed how to revive and support the patterns of earlier years, when experienced activists assisted the next generation and then gave them scope to develop their own leadership. Since more than 80% of CEP members have computer access, the process is done on-line.

How the Program Started

Adopted at the 2004 Convention, the mentorship program matches interested CEP members with more experienced people in the union, mentors. The mentor advises and guides the member's development as an activist and leader. A mentor cannot be a staff rep or a full-time union officer. The program promotes union building, social activism and education, to provide successors for today's leadership from a pool of informed, skilled and committed activists.

The key arguments that persuaded delegates to take this initiative were:

- The union had a demographic challenge, since people in their 50s dominate among staff and local leaders. The group at the top will be gone in 10 years, and should not leave people floundering.
- This is a way for people to become known beyond their immediate work area, and makes a broader pool, from which the leadership can draw for needs like member organizers, member instructors, and staff reps.
- The goal is to increase activism, by providing ongoing support from a more experienced person.

The program invites people to pass through four levels of study and action, to develop their personal capacities as leaders. At each level, people engage in union education courses, practical union experience, community activism and self-study.

How the Program Evolved

The program was launched in June 2006. In the first six weeks, 46 people registered, more than 100 by the end of October. A major challenge was finding enough mentors; at first only nine people volunteered. There was some initial confusion, as some people who wanted to be participants were experienced enough to be mentors. It had to be clarified that the profile of people in the program is as high for participant as for mentor, and that people's informal experience may qualify them to be mentors. Mentors are encouraged to tailor the steps to the person, to use their judgment around equivalencies rather than sticking to strict requirements.

A requirement in the first level of the program is to attend the course on "Anti-harassment and diversity awareness," for which the cost is covered by the local union. This three-day course responds to a growing number of inquiries and complaints from workplaces. Course participants deal with the reality of change and probe feelings in the face of facts ("does this make you feel angry, proud..."). For emerging activists, it is important to keep updated on areas like accommodation, electronic harassment, and to apply insights through an audit of their own collective agreement and through developing a plan for action in their local.

Impacts

A sense of likely impacts can come from reviewing the second level of the program, "Acquiring Leadership Skills":

Union Education Courses

At level 2, the Mentorship Program activists take one or more additional courses, for example, Steward 2, Advanced Steward, Local Officer 2, Negotiations, Financial Officer, Recording Secretary, Equity Course, Union Organizer, Pensions, Labour History, Advanced Health and Safety, or equivalent courses.

Practical Union Experience

The program activists discuss with their mentors how to build on the union activity they started at level 1, and how to start to develop leadership abilities within the union. They are encouraged to attend an equity event such as an Anti-Racism course, Women's conference, Disabled Workers conference, Young Workers conference, Pride Day event, International Women's Day event, or equivalent. Mentors suggest to participants that they take on union activities, for example: actively participate at union meetings (propose motions, speak to resolutions, etc.), co-chair a local committee (local communications committee, women's committee, young workers committee, education committee), help

establish a committee, become a health and safety activist, work on an organizing campaign, serve in an elected position (steward, trustee, executive member, bargaining committee member), become a union counselor, serve as a strike coordinator or picket captain, be active on the District Labour Council, attend a labour movement conference, attend convention.

Community Activism

Level 2 activists build on their level 1 community, political, labour or social justice group activism. The activist will discuss with the mentor how to take a leadership role in the community. Participants will participate in one of the following activities: serve on the board of directors of a women's shelter, work on the executive of a riding association, be a labour representative on a coalition (anti-poverty, anti-racism, health care), organize a union sponsored food bank drive, be local coordinator of a CEP sponsored campaign (health care, economic renewal), deliver high school presentations on unions, anti-racism, women's issues, or other equivalent activities.

Self-Study

At level 2 the Mentorship Program activist builds a better understanding of the labour movement, its structure and aims. The activist discusses with the mentor what they already know about the labour movement. Together they develop a self-study plan for the activist to become thoroughly familiar with the structure, leadership, decision-making mechanisms, policies and history of the movement.

Resource materials that may be used include:

- On-line: CLC website, FTQ website, *Just Labour*, Labour Start, Straight Goods, rabble.com, websites of other unions and labour organizations.
- Labour history: Boudreau and Roback, Fournier (FTQ, Laberge), Murray and Tremblay, Seymour, Morton, Heron, *Labour/Le travail*.
- Progressive magazines: such as *Our Times*, *Le Monde Ouvrier*.

It is early in the program to assess the impacts, but comments by delegates at the 2006 convention were very positive.

Further References

See the union website: www.cep.ca (Ensure you have a flash player, and click on the rotating cube at the top right of the home page.)

Name of Program: Leadership Program

Union: Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)

Contact Person: Johanne Labine, Education Officer, labinej@psac.com, 613.560.4273

Initial Purpose: To renew the capacity of the middle-level leadership of the PSAC to exercise their roles effectively.

Barriers Addressed:

- Ensuring that secondary level leadership explore and act on the connections between their leadership roles and anti-oppression work
- Inclusion of members of national equity structure committees as full leaders of the organization, and design of educational processes to ensure their recognition by others

Background Information

The PSAC is a national union, many of whose 150,000 members work for the federal government or agencies in a broad range of occupations – as deliverers, facilitators and enforcers of federal government services. PSAC members also work in areas that are often named as obstacles and problems by marginalized populations in Canada (customs officers, program officers with Indian Northern Affairs, fisheries officers, immigration officers, employment insurance officers and the like). However, an increasing number of PSAC members work in the private sector in women’s shelters, universities, security agencies and casinos. In the North, the PSAC represents most unionized workers employed by the governments of the Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories and some municipalities. Equity initiatives within the PSAC, in staff hiring (through employment equity measures) and in structural reform of the organization (through policies and mechanisms meant to facilitate self-organizing) have been under way in the PSAC for several years.

How the Program Started

In the past, participation in the National Officers Training Program had been developed to respond to the leadership needs of our Component structure. Once regionalization of the PSAC occurred, it became obvious that the PSAC needed to re-frame leadership training to build in participation for elected leaders in the regional councils in addition to the National Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis Circle (NAIM) and the Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC) on the same footing as the established leadership group.

This posed a challenge to design and roll out the first round of the course to 200 people, whose participation was fully funded by the central PSAC budget, between the decision in October 2005 and the National Convention in May 2006. Success in the first round (two days in length), was seen as essential if the 2006 Convention was to budget a further

three days during the 2007 budget year, with participation widened to bring in all secondary leaders (400 members) for further leadership development.

How the Program Evolved

A Reference Group was established, including experienced and new leaders in all four of the key groups to be addressed by the program. Two points quickly emerged. One was that the NAIM and EOC worked essentially in an advisory capacity rather than decision-making structures, with substantial responsibilities but few resources and little leverage on the rest of the organization. The other was that participants from the four groups of leaders had widely different starting points, making a common approach difficult but necessary.

The union's national officers at the time, Nycole Turmel and John Gordon, in addition to officers with responsibility for the PSAC Education Program, authorized an active, participatory and problem-posing approach. They also committed funds to produce four short video "triggers," less than five minutes each, which would dramatize the tensions involved in transition to a more equitable organization, without proposing pat solutions. Scripts were developed by staff with educational consultants, approved, filmed with unionized actors in both English and French, and completed, all in less than two months. The skills of veteran labour activist and video producer/director Don Bouzek of Ground Zero Productions in Edmonton were essential to completing the project on time and on budget.

The overall goal of the orientation phase was to strengthen connections of leaders to each other, their union, and their roles for movement building in the current political and economic context. The objectives of the two-day program were as follows.

Day 1 Objectives: Locating Ourselves in the Big Picture and PSAC

1. Identify our different locations as activists and leaders in PSAC and our communities
2. Identify and explore the impact of changing work and management practices on our membership
3. Connect changes in our workplaces to corporate globalization and identify key global players
4. Examine the structure of PSAC and our roles within it
5. Explore different ways to get things done within the PSAC structure
6. Identify how our different leadership roles interact – component, region, EOC, NAIM

Day 2 Objectives: Leadership that Builds Union Strength

1. Identify our own social identities and experiences as sources of knowledge for union building
2. Identify opportunities to strengthen the union by advancing equity in everyday union work

3. Practice critical thinking and creative strategy with everyday union problems
4. Consider the elements of effective leadership
5. Evaluate this course and our next steps as union leaders.

The three video “triggers” became central to the first orientation phase courses, which reached 200 PSAC leaders over 2 days in 12 locations over a period of 3 months. For example, in the afternoon of Day One, a four-minute video is screened called “Comfort Zone,” which portrays tensions in balancing roles between a leader of colour and a white leader. In it, Suzanne, a Component president approaches Shanice, recently elected to the Component executive board. Suzanne asks Shanice to reduce her focus on local issues and engage more in “the big league.” Shanice speaks to the fact that the lack of race representation in PSAC leadership means that she becomes the contact point for most racialized members. Care was taken to ensure that neither of the two characters is shown to be simply “good” or “bad,” and the video ends with a challenge to viewers to explore their views of what should happen next.

In the second day, a short video picks up a conversation over coffee between an established white officer of a regional council and a young Aboriginal activist. The third video trigger is used to set the stage for a role play around limited energies and funds for a broad public campaign to protect Medicare. In all three triggers, the effort is to depict accurately the kinds of conversations that occur inside the union around equity, without modeling correct outcomes. The energies released by such tools required appropriate preparatory reading and well-prepared facilitators, capable of maintaining a climate of respect and curiosity during difficult conversations in the group.

What’s Next

At the 2006 Convention, budget was approved for a second phase of “skill building” of the full group of secondary leadership in the PSAC. With more time to prepare, it is hoped that participation in the design process can be broadened, and that the edge provided by the video triggers can be sustained.

Further References

See <http://www.pvac.com/what/education/index-e.shtml> .

Name of Program: “The Wall” – Starting With Women’s Lives: Changing Today’s Economy

Central Labour Body: Canadian Labour Congress, Women’s and Human Rights Department

Contact Person: Bev Burke, bevburke@i-zoom.net, 905.352.2430

Initial Purpose: To engage women in discussion of gender and the economy.

Barriers Addressed: Gender, international links. Many women feel they don’t know much about the economy, and that it’s very complicated. This matters because in fact women do know a lot about the economy. They need to uncover their knowledge so that they can take part in union conversations, such as bargaining, which have an economic dimension. Women’s work is either invisible or undervalued in traditional economics, so we need to make that contribution visible.

Background Information

This is a workshop methodology, to build a visual picture together of women’s work and the economy. Many women are comfortable with participatory and visual learning methods, but there were few examples of addressing issues of the economy in this way. The Wall explores how the economy affects us as women, how women from equity-seeking groups are most affected, how it affects us differently from men and what we can do together to make changes. We often talk about it as a gender analysis of the economy. It involves women in unions, faith groups and community groups in the discussions of economic strategy that are usually dominated by men.

The Wall has been used by unions across the country, and by the Public Service International all over the world. At a broader level, it has increased women’s confidence to understand complicated issues like international trade, which impact very directly on everyone’s lives, not just men’s lives.

How the Program Started

In the late 1990s, CUPE requested the original authors, Suzanne Doerge and Bev Burke, to develop a workshop for their Women’s Conference. They had in mind an adaptation of the “AH-Ha” method developed in the 1980s by GATT-Fly, an ecumenical economic justice initiative. By then, Suzanne Doerge was working with the Churches women’s task force on poverty, where the first version of The Wall was piloted. It caught on across Canada in preparations for the World March of Women in 2000. Later, it was picked up by international union networks.

Union women have found that the visual approach helps them to see how things fit together, and how larger issues relate to their daily lives. Younger women have especially

enjoyed the interactive approach and those with less formal education feel able to participate in this because it doesn't require a lot of literacy skills.

How the Program Evolved

The initial "wall design" has been simplified a bit over the past six years. Union women who were instructing with minimal time to prepare found the initial version overwhelming. The new guide includes some handouts, ready to photocopy, so there are less flipcharts to prepare. Analytically, at the start, the process had a bottom piece to the wall, to look at the foundations of capitalism and racism. This was very complicated for other people to facilitate, so it was moved to the middle of the wall, with less of a structural analysis. The revised versions place more emphasis on equity. Now the sessions actually name on the wall those most affected: young women, rural women, Aboriginal women, women of colour.

The union work started with CUPE and shortly after CUPW used it for their Women's Conference. CUPW later adapted the wall for their first Human Rights Conference. Suzanne Doerge was asked by the CLC to adapt it for a conference on privatization. The first guide was written for the World Women's March in 2000. That is when women in other places started to make contact. A PSI education officer from Australia came to the CLC. The PSI asked Bev Burke and Suzanne Doerge to do a shorter version of The Wall for women across the Americas. It was a total shock how well it worked. Since then, it has also been used in Southeast Asia, and in Africa. In all three places, it worked extremely well. The only common factor was the involvement of the women participants in the public sector unions.

This gave a sense that it could be used internationally, and Suzanne Doerge has run "wall" workshops on public health with nurses in several countries, including Vietnam and El Salvador. Most of the adaptations with Canadian unions have been done by Bev Burke. For a full list, see <http://www.wallworkshop.com/English/WhoUsedIt/ListofOrganizations/TradeUnions.html>.

Among unions in Canada, CUPE has used The Wall across the country. They have stayed with the original approach of applying it to the economy, but also focused it on specific sectors, for women's conferences and courses. The adaptations are then in the statistics, so they reflect the particular area in which people are located. The Steelworkers brought Bev Burke in to work with the women instructors in the Women of Steel course. Then it was adapted for the International union's women's conference in Pittsburgh, with U.S. statistics, and an emphasis on working with community groups.

Other uses have been made by the CLC, by OPSEU, by the PSAC. The most recent use was by the CAW in 2006. They had used it as a workshop in their women's conference before, but this time they adapted it for the entire conference, nearly 200 women, to look at the issue of violence, at many levels from domestic to international war. So the top of

the wall changed to deal with the costs of violence and the middle analyzed the societal supports to violence such as the economy, media, government policies.

The main development since 2004 has been a website, www.wallworkshop.com. All the money for publication and for the website came from union and church women, who wanted to see how other women are using The Wall, and to make it accessible to women in other countries. The site is in Spanish, French and English. The contribution of PSAC has been to keep the French updated. The Spanish printing was covered by the Steelworkers, and the Nicaraguans do the Spanish website. Suzanne Doerge does the English. Almost all this has been unpaid, including the writing of two editions of the book. The costs are for the technical work on the website, and for printing of the book.

Impacts

A key moment in the workshop, says Suzanne Doerge, is getting past a sense of helplessness to one of empowerment. Doing ‘power line-ups’ helps this happen. Participants line up in front of the wall and start to talk about how much power they *do* have in this world. They begin to talk about where their strength comes from, and who their potential allies are. “That begins to cause a shift, as they realize their own personal power to make change in the world.”

Bev Burke sees the power of drawing out very concrete experiences of union women in all parts of their lives, and seeing together the links among them. She emphasizes the importance in working at the level of home and community with women, not just the workplace and union side of women’s lives. This highlights the issue of women’s unpaid work. In her words: “The main goal in my work now is to ensure that people come out feeling more powerful than when they started. In the Wall workshops, women really recognize they are not alone, so it works for that.”

Further References

Suzanne Doerge and Bev Burke, *Starting with Women’s Lives: Changing Today’s Economy*, A facilitator’s guide to a visual workshop methodology. Available through www.wallworkshop.com

Lorraine Endicott, “Starting with Women’s Lives: A gender-based economic analysis,” *Our Times*, February-April 2003.

Name of Program: UFCW Canada Training Centres

Union: United Food and Commercial Workers Canada

Contact Person: Bryan Neath, National Coordinator, National Training and Education Department, 416.675.1104 ext 253, bneath@ufcw.ca

Initial Purpose: To develop a place where members could obtain skills and abilities to move forward in the workplace, to improve their lives, to increase participation in the union and labour movement.

Barriers Addressed: part-time workers, gender, family responsibilities, shifts

Background Information

The United Food and Commercial Workers Canada represents over 240,000 workers across the country. Members are employed in food and retail, as well as in the manufacturing and service sectors. While the union continues to have a few single-workplace-based locals of varied sizes, there has been a growing trend within the union toward larger, merged locals. Several locals have memberships province-wide.

How the Program Started

In 1981, UFCW Local 1977 negotiated a training trust fund. Six years later they were able to open the Cliff Evans Training Centre. Within a year, the centre offered the first new-skill bakery and produce training courses. By offering new-skills training, the union wanted to help its part-time members access full-time job opportunities, and to help its female members access work not traditionally done by women. Since then, over 20,000 certificates of completion have been awarded.

The success of Local 1977 inspired other locals to negotiate and establish training trust funds. In almost all cases, the funds are union controlled. All are funded by negotiated employer contributions, based on a certain number of cents per hour per employee. Through the 1990s until today, nine other locals across Canada have established training centres.

The centres offer free training for all members, with scheduling sensitive to shifts and family responsibilities. Programs such as GED, ESL and English upgrading are common. Most courses are instructed by members or union staff.

How the Program Evolved

The UFCW Canada National Training and Education Department provides ongoing support to the training centres, including an annual educators' conference. The conference program is planned by a committee of training centre Directors. The 2006 conference focused on instructors, including new courses and training techniques. For

example, the conference included demonstrations of PowerPoint-based games like Jeopardy, Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, and Hollywood Squares with union and other course content. The national department also provides facilitation assistance for courses on health and safety, labour issues and procedures, and instructor training, as well as help in establishing trust funds and with government funding.

Local 247 represents 10,000 members in B.C. Training activities began with supports for members laid off when meat plants shut down. These activities grew and broadened to include other groups of workers facing similar needs. The Training Centre now has six locations in various communities. Most of its programs are supported by federal funding and are directed to people with multiple barriers in the labour market: experienced workers (over 45 yrs old); Trades (Trades Referral Assessment Directed Employment Strategies; including a unique tool designed to identify workers' prior learning relevant to the trades: www.transferableskills.ca); and Discovery to Apprenticeship (for youth facing barriers). The Training Centre's programs for UFCW members include literacy, English skills, GED (through partnerships with boards of education). While parents take English classes, their children are provided with a computer skills program.

Local 1518 in British Columbia has 28,000 members around the province working in four sectors: retail food (the largest number of members), industrial (red meat, poultry), health care, and commercial. The training centre, located in Surrey, offers members a wide variety of one-day computer courses with MS certified instructors. The training centre prepared illustrated manuals in clear language for the program. In addition, the training centre offers a variety of interest-based as well as labour education courses, such as steward training (open to all members), health and safety, collective bargaining, etc.

Local 1400 in Saskatchewan has about 7,000 members working in industrial, services, coops and credit unions, food and retail sectors. The largest UFCW local in Saskatchewan, its training centre has a computer lab and mobile lab, and offers such courses as First Aid/CPR, steward courses, health and safety, union counsellor training. In 2006, the training centre piloted the course, "Unionism on Turtle Island." This five-day course "begins the process of providing a basic awareness of Aboriginal peoples' history and culture as well as the contemporary issues they are facing today. It will provide factual information, dispel the current myths and misconceptions that surround Aboriginal people and, through analyzing the current political and social Aboriginal experience and learning about the uniqueness of the Aboriginal population, create a better understanding of the shared struggles of Aboriginal peoples and unions." The pilot was offered concurrent with the Local's initiation of an Aboriginal Committee, whose vision is "to break through barriers by educating all workers and continue to learn together about Aboriginal Awareness and bring forth understanding and solidarity."

Local 500R's Training Centre in Montreal offers French as a second language and computer courses, as well as skills training for the food industry. In a simulated grocery store in their large centre, members as well as youth and immigrant workers from the community are introduced to different store careers such as cashiers, meat cutting, etc.

Local 361W's training centre in Halifax provides members with support in job search including resume planning. Local 401's training centre in Edmonton provides a broad range of labour studies courses. Local 1000A represents members working at Loblaws and No Frills grocery stores in Ontario. Their training centre offers such courses as stewards training, organizing, instructor training, health and safety.

See sketches in this report on the training centres of Locals 175, 1977 and 832.

Impacts

“We've been able to reach thousands and thousands of members – members that we normally wouldn't reach with traditional union education – by offering various courses,” says Bryan Neath. “Members come in for CPR, but all training has a union aspect. Members gain a better understanding of the union. There's absolutely a cross-over to other union courses and programs. Members who have been involved in training are more likely to become active in the union.”

The centres and training funds have also enabled the union to develop programs that they otherwise might not be able to do, including union-driven courses such as “Unionism on Turtle Island.” Notes Neath: “This helps us reach out to members in a diversified way.”

What's Next

The training centres continue to develop new materials and new programs (for example for diversity training), and updating old programs that can then be used nationally. They also plan to introduce more technology into training programs, such as interactive video and PowerPoint-based games.

The national union also hopes to benefit the training centres and members through its participation in sector councils. Working in the Canadian Food Industry Council for example, there is potential for developing country-wide distance education and other training programs for retail workers.

The Textile Human Resources Council's Skills and Learning Sites Program has plans to develop cost-shared learning sites in 30 textile workplaces, many of whose workers are represented by UFCW Canada. The first of these sites opened in July 2005 at the Firestone Textiles plant in Woodstock, Ontario. The centre is operated by a joint union-management committee (UFCW Local 175), and includes a computer lab and two classrooms. Using an integrated approach to training, courses include essential skills, technical training, personal development and are delivered by the union as well as other providers.

UFCW Local 175 is also the home for the second learning site. The sector council is funding a communication/media centre at the Local's main Training Centre in Mississauga. A studio will enable the Training Centre to launch both a radio as well as webcasting programs.

Further References

Links to UFCW Training Centres across Canada:

<http://www.ufcw.ca/Default.aspx?SectionID=e5985d5a-ae9f-402b-9750-6367d0d6496f&LanguageId=1>

Information about UFCW Local 247's Transferable Skills Initiative is included in Karen Charnow Lior and Arlene Wortsman, research by Jen Liptrot, "Renewing Apprenticeship: Innovative Approaches", published by the Toronto Training Board, March 2006. <http://ttb.on.ca/ttb/epublications/RenewingApprenticeship4.pdf>

Information about UFCW Local 175 / Firestone Textiles workplace learning centre: http://www.thrc-crhit.org/en/thrcnews/archives/2005/2005_news_firestone_launch-en.asp

Name of Program: Internet Distance Education Program

Union: United Food and Commercial Workers Locals 175 and 633

Contact Person: Victor Carrozzino, Director, victor.carrozzino@ufcw175.com, 905.821.8329

Initial Purpose: To use technology to help build the union; to provide educational opportunities to as many members as possible, where members live.

Barriers Addressed: shift work; time constraints of parents with young children, single parents; participants in remote areas; different learning styles

Background Information

With about 50,000 members, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175 is the largest union local in Canada. Members are employed in retail, retirement and nursing facilities, packaging, manufacturing and other sectors, throughout Ontario.

Together with Local 633, Local 175 operates Training Centres in Mississauga and Hamilton, supplemented with a wide variety of programs offered regionally. Initiated about 10 years ago, the training program is funded through a training trust fund based on negotiated employer contributions. All programs are available free to members and their families. In addition to the Internet Distance Education Program, the Training Centre offers computer courses, ESL and Grade 12 (in partnership with school boards around the province), stewards seminars, health and safety courses, First Aid/CPR, study and test writing skills, math, enhanced reading and writing, GED test preparation, safe food handling, women's self-defence.

How the Program Started

About eight years ago, the Training Centre started exploring possibilities for distance education, a continuation of efforts to reach more members, where they live. The early stage of the program was experimental, limited by the high cost of development at that time (about \$300,000 to develop a 3-5 hour course).

How the Program Evolved

“A turning point was reached about three years ago,” explains Training Centre director Victor Carrozzino, with several contributing factors:

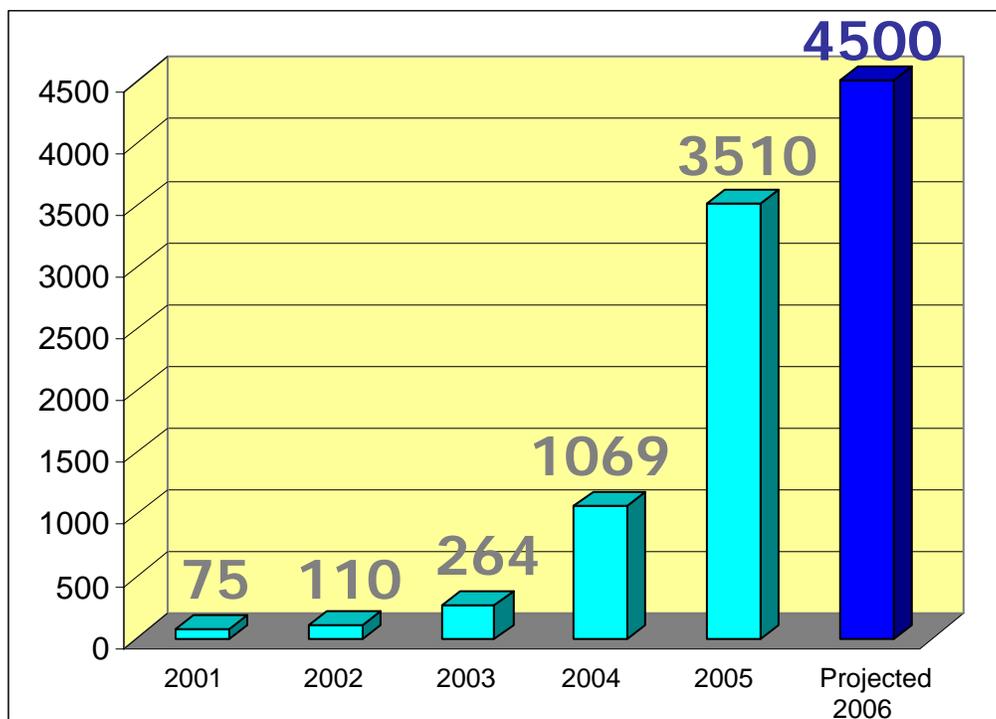
- a full-fledged technical environment, “learning management system”, provided the needed infrastructure and allowed for audio-visual conferencing (today's “TEC Room”)
- access to high speed internet expanded geographically; a growing number of members had access, allowing video in a realistic way as well as more animations, greater interactivity, etc.

- the Centre rapidly increased the number of courses offered using the internet: first mainly technical, computer related courses; then – using the developed methodology, teaching aids, and TEC Room – they expanded course offerings to include health and safety and labour education

The Training Centre’s staff and administrators have undergone technical skills development. Today all five instructors, as well as youth leaders and adjustment staff are able to be course developers. All instructors rotate through assignments in distance education instructing.

Around 60 courses are offered through the internet-based distance education program. About one-third are short, specialized health and safety modules, which together with longer health and safety courses have been developed in partnership with the Workers Health and Safety Centre. There is an orientation available online, to introduce new participants to the system.

Number Trained Through Internet Distance Education Program



For all Training Centre programs, 3338 people participated in 2003; 4447 in 2004; and 7960 in 2005. Roughly 45% of current distance education participants take health and safety courses, 30% take computer courses, and 25% take labour education courses.

The methodology is highly interactive, well supported, and engages participants in a dynamic way. The program builds connections, links between individual participants and the union. Features of each course include:

- quizzes, demonstrations
- video
- 1-800 # for questions (with instructors responding to participants individually)
- forums
- “TEC Room” Each course includes a TEC room component (TEC stands for Training and Education Centre). At specific times, for about 30-45 minutes, one evening and weekend day each week, the course participants “meet” online at the same time. Moderated by the instructor (who is visible through video), participants ask questions, offer comments, engage in conversation. Using mikes, participants can hear each other, and can see each other if they have a web-cam. TEC Room sessions help build understanding and solidarity across the union.

Although the Training Centre has not yet done a study on gender, age or other aspects of participants, Carrozzino cites strong anecdotal evidence from participants regarding their ability to overcome barriers to participation through distance education. There are no limits on timing (although course duration is normally one month). Course availability and convenience are widely praised. The program helps overcome the problem of shift work including rotating shifts; time constraints of parents with young children, single parents. The program is particularly popular among participants in remote areas, who face the problem of a general lack of community education resources for adults, and whose small numbers may preclude group union classes. In addition, online learning better suits some personalities – it’s a preferred learning method for many members.

The Training Centre has several years experience of school board partnerships in different parts of Ontario to provide high school credits in union classes. However, not all school boards have adult education programs, especially in Northern Ontario. As well, the union doesn’t always have the critical mass of numbers to have a class. To meet continuing need, the Training Centre initiated the provision of high school credit courses in its Distance Education Program, in partnership with the Avon Maitland School Board. The Training Centre enrolls participants and does the paperwork; the school board delivers the courses.

The partnership builds on the school board’s experience with providing high school credit courses using distance education for children of Canadian military personnel overseas. Though the board had good support and methodology, it had no previous experience with adults. The program is proving beneficial for both sides.

Impacts

Through distance education, members are “breaking the ice with education” – they may start with computer courses and then move on to labour education. Distance education is just one component of the local’s broader education, communication, and youth programs whose common goal is to build the membership and union through outreach and service. In this broader context, the program helps bring more members into core union activities.

“Union renewal can only be done through the membership,” suggests Carrozzino. “Education is one of the ways to do that. We hook them through CPR courses, or whatever their personal motivation is. Most adult educators recognize the importance of relevancy of the course to the participant. We give value-added, and then members are more open to other courses. Education, lifelong learning becomes part of their lives, and the union is the catalyst.”

Carrozzino notes that there is now more participation of previously under-represented groups, for example second language speakers and ethnic minorities. Participants spread their experience to others in the workplace.

The program’s impact on the union can be seen clearly in health and safety. Through distance education, courses are now available to all members, beyond the select few. The intent of the health and safety courses offered on the internet is to raise awareness and the knowledge of the membership generally. Carrozzino notes that after taking the courses, “the members are increasing their participation and have become more active in support of the health and safety reps. They assist the reps, question the reps, there is renewed interest in health and safety. This also helps with ongoing transition, which is partly a generational change.”

The Distance Education Program also benefits the broader community. The Training Centre makes some of its courses available to school board partners, for example health and safety, introduction to unionism and safe food handling courses. The Centre has provided curriculum and a one-day training session for teachers from two Toronto-area schools. Health and Safety 1 has been offered to participants in two Toronto non-profit agencies: Working Women Community Centre pre-bakery program and Microskills youth program.

“Distance education breaks the limits on accessibility, helps make the union more open and democratic,” concludes Carrozzino.

What’s Next

“More and more!”

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Name of Program: Implementing a Labour Education Framework

Central Labour Body: Toronto and York Region Labour Council / Labour Education Centre

Contact Person: Jojo Geronimo, LEC Executive Director, 416.537.6532 ext 2200, jgeronimo@laboureducation.org

Initial Purpose: Mission statement: to build the capacity of unions to plan, develop and deliver training, adjustment, and labour education programs that transform the lives of individual members and build the strength, solidarity and equity of their unions.

Barriers Addressed: race, class, gender

Background Information

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council (TYLC) is composed of 150 local unions representing 195,000 working men and women in Toronto and York Region. In 1987, the Council established its education project, the Labour Education Centre (LEC), as a non-profit corporation. At that time, LEC included the Council's Labour Studies Certificate Program (begun in the mid-1970s), the English in the Workplace Program (begun in the early 1980s), and the then new programs: Adult Basic Education, services for laid-off workers, and the Equality program. Financed mainly through federal and provincial government funding supplemented by fee for service contracts with unions and other central labour bodies, LEC continues to provide assistance to unions facing layoffs and closures, assistance to unemployed workers, a Literacy and Basic Skills program, Passport to Learning – Labour Studies Certificate Program, and education and training services for the labour movement. The Centre is affiliated with George Brown Community College.

How the Program Started

The current effort draws on the long history of LEC as an educational centre for working people, building labour solidarity as it tries to address issues of equity such as class, gender, race. More recently, LEC has responded to the call of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, its parent organization, to strategically focus labour's effort on the root causes of unemployment/underemployment, the gap between rich and poor, the erosion of workers' rights and power, and the gutting of essential public services. These strategic priorities, reflected in the council document "A Million Reasons to Take Action," have provided the context for LEC to embark on activating a coherent labour education framework. This framework is informed by an understanding of power relations based on a critical analysis of class, race, and gender in a globalized economy, and seen from an anti-oppression perspective.

How the Program Evolved

The main drivers behind the program are both internal and external. Externally, the domination of global capital over economies and countries and the corresponding retreat by progressive movements, including labour, have led to a re-thinking of the effectiveness of current strategies for building a labour movement.

Internally, there has been an ongoing discourse and critique about how the house of labour itself needs to re-examine its vision, strategies, and structure to respond more effectively to the threat from without and the gaps from within. In this self re-examination, the role of education has been re-assessed. This evolving model wants to see labour's role as a vehicle – strategic, critical, transformative – that can help achieve the resurgence of a labour movement that is militant, progressive, and democratic.

The critical need to address both internal and external challenges has always been acknowledged. But there has not been a strong consensus on what such a critical and transformative education would look like, its scope, and its implementation strategy. One of the tensions, among many, that keeps resurfacing is how to reconcile the “building the movement” approach with the approach oriented on more tactical and issue-specific campaigns. Succinctly, how do we integrate the immediate goal of “winning a campaign” (be it organizing, political action, or contract negotiation) and “building” (whether it is organizational capacity or consensus around a common vision about who we are, what we stand for as a union, and the kind of society we want to create)? Are we just running a campaign, or building a movement? Are we training foot soldiers, or are we developing a cadre of activists for social change?

Features of LEC's labour education framework

In this light, LEC defines its approach to labour education as characterized by the following features:

- an explicit naming of education as a *political vehicle for change* that challenges the dominant right-wing agenda
- an *anti-oppression framework* that integrates an analysis of class, race, and gender in the current political moment (e.g. “war against terrorism”) and as applied to the concrete realities of the workplace, sector/industry, or geographical community of a particular union, in the context of a globalized economy
- a strong *analytical approach* not only to issues but also to the overall socio-economic and political environment, as the basis for creative strategizing; collective action that arises from a *common analysis*, which in turn is the outcome of education
- close integration of course goals and learning objectives to the different strategic goals of the union, in the areas of organizing, bargaining, political advocacy, coalition building, and internal organizational change; where broad strategic goals are absent, education helps facilitate a strategic debate about priorities

- the use of *popular education* that empowers the learner and incorporates respectful dialogue among learners and instructors, critical reflection, and creative problem-solving
- the linkage between organized labour and community-based groups, using *community unionism* as a model
- the *integration* of such course goals as literacy and basic skills development, citizen engagement, building stronger unions, consciousness raising, community empowerment, and organizational change

Impacts (Tentative)

Some of the more immediate implications of this approach are beginning to be reflected internally in terms of how LEC goes about its planning and programming:

In our labour adjustment and action centre programs, we intend to:

- include an economic literacy approach that will help learners understand better the root causes of unemployment and joblessness; that links workplace closure to the global corporate agenda; that challenges the concept of “labour” being just a “labour market,” and “training” as solely an instrument of productivity
- work with unions so that laid-off workers’ action centres and strategies are linked to their ongoing strategy of organizing and bargaining

In our basic skills and literacy program:

- to transform literacy education into a tool not only for “reading the word, but also reading the world,” enabling workers to name their collective reality as workers (i.e. overworked, vulnerable, disconnected); to find common ground with other members; to make that link between their lives and political events, and then to invite them to help shape a common vision as a union – and thus move the learners to action
- to help facilitate a link between the literacy movement and the labour movement, between literacy educators and labour educators; to support a stronger union role in promoting literacy education for its members, and in valuing literacy education as a potent force for union building

In our labour studies program:

- to promote explicitly labour education as a political act, a tool at the service of making changes at various levels (individual, organizational, and societal), to build a stronger labour movement. It would approach political change from an anti-oppression perspective, integrating class, race, and gender in its analysis, planning and programming
- to enhance an equity analysis of the working class, not in the generic sense, but in its differentiated reality: the social realities of *women workers, immigrant workers, racialized workers, workers with disabilities, gay and lesbian workers, part-time and contingent workers, older and younger workers*, etc.

LEC helps facilitate regular contact and networking among educators – from community, labour and policy settings – in a way that will break down silos between program categories (e.g. literacy vs skills training vs labour education). This effort also aims to further strengthen a popular education approach that emphasizes critical analysis of social issues, linking labour to the broader social movement, and empowering rank and file members to think and act on their agency, whether individually or collectively.

What's Next

Response to the initial forays of LEC indicate a real need for this approach. Some of the next steps will be:

- seeking and expanding opportunities to work on equity programs in partnership with affiliates
- supporting dialogue between labour and the broader progressive forces outside the house of labour
- assisting Labour Council with such equity forums as the annual Aboriginal and Workers of Colour Conference to further engage members and affiliates
- participating in the planning of the Solidarity Institute of the CLC Ontario Region, which aims to develop union leadership among members of racialized communities
- working with community-based educators and workers' centres in pursuit of equity goals
- pursuing this approach on a cross-border basis through continued participation and sponsorship of the following affiliations (among others):
 - Cross Border Dialogue (US, Canada and Mexico): a loose network of educators, policy advocates, and social justice advocates from unions, grassroots organizations, and academe
 - Centre for Labor Renewal/Mobile Education Program: a group of union and university-based labour educators who focus on developing labour education in a global context, emphasizing critical thought, creative strategies, and organizational change

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Passport to Learning website: lec-passporttolearning.org

Name of Program: A Training Strategy for Hospitality Workers in UNITE HERE

Union: UNITE HERE Local 75

Contact Person: Janet Dassinger, Special Projects Coordinator, 416.807.6532,
jdassinger@unitehere.ca

Initial Purpose: To build the union through a training and education strategy integrated into organizing and all facets of the union.

Barriers Addressed: race, gender, non-recognition of skills and foreign credentials

Background Information

The 6000 members of UNITE HERE Local 75 work in the hospitality industry in the Greater Toronto Area. Members work as room attendants, servers, and a variety of other occupations in hotels and restaurants.

How the Program Started

When SARS resulted in widespread layoffs and reduced hours for Toronto-area hospitality workers in 2003, UNITE HERE Local 75 quickly learned that training was a huge need of members. Training was intimately related to job opportunity and mobility. This was particularly so for the largely immigrant workforce represented by the union.

Workers face many barriers: denied opportunity to have skills recognized, denied jobs and promotion due to racism and sex typing in jobs. The nature of the contingent work is a further barrier, renowned for its irregular schedules. “Part-time hours and low pay mean many workers have more than one job to cobble together a living,” notes Janet Dassinger, the Local’s special project coordinator.

While the union has always been aware of barriers, there is growing recognition of training as a strategy for equity, and to see the need for a union training strategy that is part of the union building program.

The training program is in the development stage, led by local leadership and staff. A major goal is to link equity objectives and training. The training initiative has four major themes:

- language and literacy, including basic computers and math
- job training, to enable workers to move between job classifications
- apprenticeships and trade certification (for example, members working as cooks and in maintenance jobs have the required hours of work experience, but need theory)
- recognition of prior learning and foreign credentials

Local 75 sees training as an integral part of the international union's comprehensive Hotel Workers Rising initiative, and its key elements of union organizing, community rising, research (new hotel developments), and a customer campaign.

How the Program Is Evolving

The training strategy is part of 2006 contract negotiations with major Toronto hotels. This includes bargaining training funds, as well as seeking agreement on a joint union-management workplace training committee at each worksite. The committee's role would include making programs relevant and monitoring progress, and may be coupled with a workplace ombudsperson regarding training and other opportunities. A breakthrough agreement with the Sheraton Hotel includes an Equal Opportunity Training Fund financed through employer contributions of one cent per hour per employee, and also establishes a joint training committee at the workplace. A Letter of Understanding outlines the intention to provide such courses as English as a second language.

The Local is seeking a union-controlled training fund, financed through bargained dollars supplemented by government funding. The union is pursuing partnerships with educational, community and industry trainers, for example a partnership with the Building Trades Council to assist with theory and test preparation for maintenance workers seeking trade certification. Such partnerships would complement the planned use of worker-trainers, especially for entry-level job training, and of members with teaching degrees from their home countries.

An innovative element of the training strategy is the inclusion of future workers. Over the next five years, 5000 new industry jobs are expected. Working with developers of hotel and related projects, the union is partnering with community groups in the neighbourhood of the development to press for local hiring as part of the community benefits required in development approvals.

Currently, the Local is working with the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative to recruit Regent Park (public housing) tenants for training as hotel workers. The goal is to place the trained workers in a condo-hotel being built nearby. Also tied to the major inner-city Regent Park public housing redevelopment, is the union's support for the building of a Hotel Workers Housing Co-op. The ground floor of the 65-unit building will be a union training centre, with full teaching kitchen, a café/restaurant for tenants and the community, two classrooms and offices. Construction is scheduled to start in the spring of 2007.

Similar initiatives combining community-based partnerships, local hiring, affordable housing, training and apprenticeships for local youth are planned for the expected development at Woodbine Racetrack, in the high-need neighbourhood of Rexdale.

Exciting as these plans are, the development of a union training strategy is not easy. "It's a challenge to shift from 'it's *nice* to have a training program' to 'it's *crucial* to have a training program,'" explains Dassinger. Although training and education are a way of

building leadership, “it’s hard to expand the union’s way of thinking. They have their own model of organizing and leadership. It’s hard to change organizational culture, since it works.” Training and education are sometimes seen as diverting from the union program, a risk. Activists and leaders can be suspicious of employer partnerships.

In her efforts, Dassinger points to the role of union-provided training in the success of UNITE HERE in Las Vegas, where union membership has grown from 15,000 to 60,000 in the last 10 years. “The highest union honour in UNITE HERE is to be an organizer,” notes Dassinger. “To persuade people is to ‘organize’ them. I’ve yet to ‘organize’ them in the training agenda. To integrate training into the overall organizing of the union, worker leaders, the core rank and file leadership, leaders from the hotel committees will be key.”

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