

October 13, 2006

Aboriginal CUPE women make a difference

VICTORIA - CUPE BC is celebrating Women's History Month – a national initiative established by the Government of Canada in 1992. This year's theme, *Aboriginal Women: The Journey Forward*, dovetails with CUPE BC's 2nd Aboriginal Gathering.



Seventy-nine participants will come together for the Aboriginal Gathering in Victoria themed *Creating the Inner Warrior: Empowering our Aboriginal members*. From October 13 to 15 the participants will network and attend workshops and keynote sessions.

"CUPE has some incredible Aboriginal women activists who have tirelessly pursued the rights of women and Aboriginal people. I am very proud that they are a part of our union," says Debbie Taylor, chair of the CUPE BC Women's Committee.

CUPE BC's Aboriginal working group has been key in ensuring the Aboriginal Gathering is a success. The working group is a subcommittee of CUPE BC's Committee Against Racism and Discrimination (CARD). Its members work to implement the Aboriginal Council's Action Plan and respond to issues of interest and concern to Aboriginal members throughout CUPE.

Five members of the eight-member-working group are women and we have profiled them below.

Audrey Barr is from the Cree Nation and comes from Regina. She has been a member of CUPE since 1994 when she moved from Halifax to Kelowna to work for School District #23 (CUPE 3523). She has held a number of positions within CUPE, including General Shop Steward and Vice-President. At the local level, she sits on a number of committees: Joint Job Evaluation, Bargaining, Entertainment, Racism-Free, Steering, The Learning Centre, Political Action and the Okanagan Mainline District Council. Audrey recently completed training to become a CUPE National Representative.

Carrie Bishop is a member of the Cree Nation from Nelson, B.C. An inside worker for the City of Castlegar, where she works in Finance and Administration, Carrie serves her local (CUPE 2262) as Sergeant at Arms and sits on CUPE BC's political action committee. In addition to volunteering in the provincial and municipal elections, she was a member organizer for the 2006 federal election, volunteers for her local soup kitchen and is a member of CUPE National's Persons With Disabilities Working Group.

Jackie Corfield comes from the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people of the Ucluelet First Nation and has been adopted into the Heiltsuk Nation. Her Heiltsuk name is Dhu`guala `ga (Treasure Woman), a name she carries with great pride as the Heiltsuk Nation and Nuu-Chah-Nulth have continued a connection dating back several generations. The mother of two boys, Jackie has spent the past 10 years as an Aboriginal Education Assistant at Bayview Elementary in School District #68 in Nanaimo, where she is a proud member of CUPE 606.



Pierrette Leclerc is a Metis from Winnipeg. Employed by the City of Prince George as an associate business license inspector, Pierrette has served her local (CUPE 1048) as trustee, and the Northern Area District Council as Diversity Vice-President, as well as sitting on the Central Health and Safety Committee for the City. As a member of the Aboriginal Working Group, Pierrette was instrumental in organizing the 2005 "Include Me!" event celebrating cultural diversity in Prince George. She is also an organizer for the St. Vincent De Paul soup kitchen and May to November food drive, funded by CUPE 1048 and 399. Pierrette enjoys gardening, fishing, camping, travelling and spending time with her grandchildren.

Darlene Smith is from the Cree Nation in Manitoba. A CUPE member for the past 18 years (Local 1698), she works at the Fraser Valley Regional Library as a library operations assistant and is the treasurer of her union local. Formerly the Diversity Vice-President (Aboriginal) on the CUPE BC executive board, Darlene currently sits as Regional Vice-President for the Fraser Valley District Council, which she has also served as secretary, and chair of the library committee.