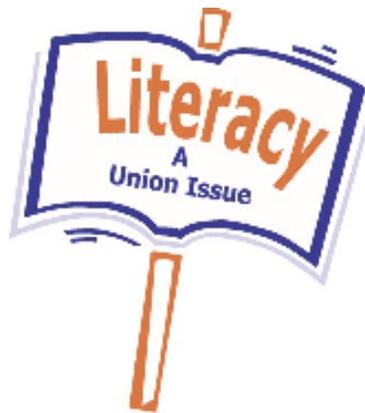


Evaluation

OF THE

Canadian Union of Public Employees Literacy Program



"Literacy is just another name for access and inclusion"

SUMMARY REPORT

Prepared for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

**Bev Burke
August, 2006**

Contents

Preface	3
Glossary of terms and abbreviations used in this report	4
PART A - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	5
1. Introduction	5
2. Context.....	5
3. Program Description	5
PART B - EVALUATION FINDINGS	7
Assessment of program activities.....	7
1. Coordination.....	7
2. Resources.....	8
3. Workshops and Union Education Courses	10
4. Workplace Programs	13
5. Integrating Literacy and Clear Language.....	15
Impact of the program.....	17
Lessons Learned	18
PART C - FUTURE DIRECTIONS	21
Program Priorities.....	21
1. Goals of the program.....	21
2. Program strategies	21
3. Program Activities	21
Summary of Recommendations.....	23
APPENDICES: CASE STUDIES	27
Case Study #1	28
Case Study #2.....	37
Case Study #3	45
Case Study #4.....	53
CHARTS	
Chart #1 - List of Resources.....	9
Chart #2 - CUPE-delivered courses and workshops	11
Chart #3 - A union vision of literacy.....	12
Chart #4 - Benefits and constraints of employer-funded programs.....	14
Chart #5 - How CUPE made the present	16

Preface

“This is an organizational first. It is the first time we have done an external evaluation of a CUPE program.”

How the evaluation came about

The CUPE literacy program has been funded since 2000 through a grant from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS). At the end of five years, the NLS offers the option of an external evaluation, directed by the recipient organization and funded by the NLS. CUPE decided to take advantage of this opportunity.

Impact on the organization

The evaluation has provided a chance to reflect on past work. It is also being used in the strategic planning process by the CUPE Literacy Reference Group to help chart the course for future work.

The CUPE Evaluation Committee noted these unexpected benefits from the evaluation process:

- It got a lot of people in CUPE talking about the literacy program;
- The participatory process helped demystify ‘evaluation’ and develop some capacity among committee members in this area;
- It helped raise awareness of a union vision of literacy.

Credits

Special thanks to:

- Literacy Reference Group members and staff who guided the project and organized the case study visits;
- CUPE Senior Staff who helped with staff surveys;
- Evaluation participants who took time in their very busy schedules to do an interview or complete a questionnaire;
- Eliane Letellier in the Union Development Department who helped in countless ways;
- And Sylvia Sioufi, national literacy coordinator, for her assistance and her patience.

Glossary of terms and abbreviations used in this report

Organizational terms	
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
NEB	National Executive Board
Tech staff	Staff in the departments of education, legal, research etc at the national level. They are called 'specialists' in the regions.
UD	Union Development Department
Literacy/education/training	
BEST	Basic Education for Skills Training
CAMA	Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators
GED	General Education Diploma - Exam equivalent to Grade 12
HEU	Hospital Employees' Union (BC Health Service Division of CUPE)
HRSDC	Human Resources and Social Development Canada
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
LRG	Literacy Reference Group (CUPE) ¹
LWG	Literacy Working Group (of the CLC)
MCL	Movement for Canadian Literacy
NLS	National Literacy Secretariat (of the HRDC)
OISE	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (now called OISE/UT)
OLC	Ontario Literacy Coalition
WEST	Workers Education for Skill Training
WLP	Workplace Literacy Project
'Basic Skills' and 'Essential Skills'	We use 'literacy and basic skills', except where a program is called "Essential Skills" as in Local 500 (Case study #1)
Other Labour organizations	
CEP	Communications, Energy, Paperworkers Union of Canada
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CUPW	Canadian Union of Postal Workers
LEC	Labour Education Centre (formerly MLEC)
NSFL	Nova Scotia Federation of Labour
QFL	Quebec Federation of Labour
SFL	Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers

¹ This name has recently been changed to 'Literacy Working Group'. However we will continue to use 'Literacy Reference Group' in this report to avoid confusion with the CLC Literacy Working Group.

PART A - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“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”.

Paul Moist, CUPE National President

1. Introduction

CUPE saw the evaluation as an opportunity both to reflect on past work and identify key priority areas for the future. The Literacy Reference Group and a CUPE evaluation committee developed a set of questions for the evaluator to address. Data was collected from more than 600 CUPE members and staff through focus groups, interviews, a document review, surveys and four case studies of local literacy and clear language projects.

2. Context

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is Canada’s largest union representing over 535,000 public sector workers. The CUPE national literacy program was launched amid discussions of training and adjustment in the 1990s. CUPE senior staff and leadership played key roles in a number of creative labour literacy initiatives which took advantage of provincial government funding. Some CUPE locals in the municipal sector were also involved in literacy projects through the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA). At the federal level, the National Literacy Secretariat was set up in 1988 to fund developmental literacy projects across the country. CUPE decided to build on the literacy work already going on in the municipal sector, and take advantage of NLS funding to launch its own national union literacy program in 2000.

3. Program Description

One of the first program initiatives was a National Literacy Conference in 2001 to pull together the experiences CUPE already had across the country. Working from that base of support the national literacy program was developed. While the focus of the program has shifted over time, the goals have remained fairly constant:

- To promote the value of literacy and workplace learning and the key role that CUPE can play in moving the literacy and clear language agenda forward;
- To facilitate the development of new and existing workplace programs and clear language initiatives that address the literacy needs of CUPE members;
- To integrate literacy and clear language into the organizational culture and work of the union at the national, provincial and local levels.

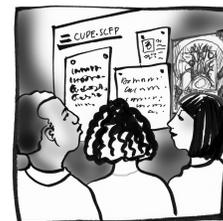
Program activities have included:

- Workplace programs to help members develop basic skills.
- Production and promotion of resources.
- Workshops on literacy and clear language.
- Coordination through the Literacy Reference Group.
- Integrating literacy and clear language into the union agenda.

Full time literacy coordinator, Sylvia Sioufi, is widely respected in literacy circles and provides leadership to the program. A half-time bilingual position has been required to provide administrative support. Housed in Union Development, the staff coordinator reports to the Director of the Department. The Literacy Reference Group (LRG) was set up in 2000 to advise the National Executive Board (NEB) and staff on the literacy program. The LRG achieved formal status as a National Working Group in 2005. An NEB-appointed literacy liaison person also sits on the LRG and reports back to the National Executive Board.

The CUPE literacy program has been funded by the National Literacy Secretariat. From July 2000 to October 2006 CUPE will have received \$862,815 from the NLS. A key commitment was made by the NEB in 2003 to continue funding the literacy coordinator position should the NLS funding end.

PART B - EVALUATION FINDINGS



Assessment of program activities

Each of the program activities was examined in light of the evaluation questions. Below are some of the key findings for each area of work.

1. Coordination

Coordination is carried out through the Literacy Reference Group and the Staff Literacy Coordinator.

OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that program goals are met and program activities are carried out • Promote and support program activities • Provide opportunities for activists to share experiences • Provide opportunities for capacity building among literacy activists • Shape the CUPE literacy program • Communicate results to union staff and leadership • Network with literacy activists in other unions and in the community
STRATEGIES TO MEET OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LRG members are chosen for their involvement in and passion for literacy, as well as their geographical location • UD staff with a particular interest in literacy are a resource to the LRG • Members report on literacy activity in their regions • There is a skills development component in each LRG meeting • Informal opportunities are created for building trust • The LRG has become part of CUPE's National Committee structure • An outreach fund covers LRG member expenses to do work in the regions • Activists outside the labour movement are invited to LRG meetings • A full-time Literacy Coordinator situated in and reporting to the UDD
EFFECTIVENESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LRG is an effective national committee • The role of the LRG has shifted over time to adapt to a changing context • Members benefit from their participation • The LRG has influenced the CUPE literacy agenda • The staff literacy coordinator is highly valued and respected • The role of the staff literacy coordinator needs to reflect staff capacity
RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LRG is an effective mechanism. Continue the strategies used to date • Clarify the role of the LRG member in reporting to Divisions • Create a one-page reporting tool for use by LRG members • Explore ways to deepen links between LRG members and their Divisions. • Strengthen working relationships with the regional education staff • Clarify the future role of the LRG • Monitor the workload of the national literacy coordinator

2. Resources

Resources produced by both CUPE and the CLC and distributed by CUPE.

OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of why literacy is a union issue• Provide tools to support existing and new workplace programs• Share experiences of CUPE locals in literacy and clear language• Help build capacity among literacy activists and staff
STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs identification through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Literacy Reference Group- Union Development department staff- The CLC Literacy Working Group• Resource development through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Literacy Coordinator- Contract person hired, working with the Coordinator- Involvement in CLC materials development• Resource distribution through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- CUPE Locals- Union Development regional staff- Literacy Network (500 names)- CLC Literacy Working Group contacts- The website
EFFECTIVENESS OF RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources are high quality• High demand for key resources• Used inside and outside of CUPE• Used primarily to build awareness and capacity• CUPE contribution key to the development of CLC resources
RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to use and distribute CLC and CAMA resources• Ask Locals to ensure that the Literacy Newsletter gets distributed to the local executive and committee members• Introduce CUPE member facilitators to the literacy and clear language resources and their potential use

Chart #1 - List of Resources

Name of publication	#distributed
Literacy Pamphlets #1 and #2 Promotional materials for presentations, workshops	1,600
Do your members know their contract? A clear language guide for CUPE locals with sample language	3000
Up to the Certification Challenge (Research Report) A CUPE study to look at ways union education can support workers to meet new licensing or certification requirements	150
Up to the Certification Challenge (Booklet) Describes highlights from the research report	3800
It's Our Right (Booklet) Tells the story of eight workplace programs in CUPE locals	3800
CUPE and CLC Literacy Bookmarks	6000
CUPE Newsletter Published 3 or 4 times a year, featuring literacy news and stories from locals	4500 per issue
Advocate's Kits A binder of resource materials for literacy activists	30
CLC Learning for our lives Poster	400
CLC Learning for our lives A union guide to worker-centred literacy	130
CLC Seeds for change A curriculum guide for worker-centred literacy	50
CLC Newsletter: Learning for our lives	750 per issue
CLC Making it clear binder Used in clear language workshops	25
CLC Clear language rulers	2800
CLC Bargaining Basic Skills What we should know about negotiating worker-centred literacy	70
Fact Sheets on workplace programs Provides more information on programs described in the booklet 'It's our Right'	In process

3. Workshops and Union Education Courses

OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop capacity in CUPE locals to run a union-centred workplace literacy program • Create awareness and build skills in clear language • Train union staff and activists in a union vision of literacy • Help develop a network of literacy activists within CUPE
STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adapt week-long CLC courses on literacy and clear language for CUPE needs - Encourage CUPE staff and activists to participate in CLC week-long courses - Develop a modular series of CUPE courses with on-line access • Course delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-facilitate the CLC week-long Union-Based Literacy course - Deliver CUPE workshops and courses through regional education staff or through co-facilitation with a Literacy Reference Group member² - Include workshops in the CUPE National Literacy Conference and CAMA events - Provide subsidies to both CLC and CUPE workshops to increase access • Course evaluation and follow-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant evaluation at the end of each course
EFFECTIVENESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops/courses are an effective way to build literacy activists • Workshops are accessible although barriers remain • Workshops/courses highly evaluated by participants and facilitators • Methodology consistent with the principles of worker-centred education • Evidence of some application of learning • Limited follow-up
RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer workshops and courses on clear language and union-based literacy • Make literacy and clear language a priority for the work of all UD staff • Set up a system to track access to courses and to measure impact on the local • Offer follow-up support (contacts) to course participants • Make contact information for course participants available to the LRG reps • Target more workshops to specific audiences linked to program goals • Schedule member facilitators to teach a literacy course within six months of training

² A new strategy will train member facilitators from the regions to co-facilitate the newly developed literacy workshops with Union Development staff.

Chart #2 - CUPE-delivered courses and workshops

Workshop	Year	Month	Location	# Participants
<i>Clear Language</i>	2001	January * Literacy Conference	Hull	20
		February	Edmonton	7
		February	Fort McMurray	6
	2003	February	Moose Jaw	15
	2004	February	Halifax	11
		April	Langley	6
		September	Prince George	4
		October	Corner Brook	10
		November	Sydney	7
	2005	March	Halifax	17
		March	Vernon	8
		April	Saskatoon	10
		May	Baddeck	10
		June	Surrey	10
		October	Medicine Hat	7
		October	Winnipeg	12
	2006	February	Toronto	7
		March	Halifax	5
		March	Langley	5
April		Vancouver	7	
<i>Literacy</i>	2001	January * Literacy Conference	Hull	60
	2002	May	Red Deer	4
		July	Truro	9
	2003	February	Gimli	5
		April	Toronto	10
		July	Sydney	9
	2005	February	Toronto	15
		November	Toronto	18
	2006	February	Toronto	18
		February	Toronto	25
March		Regina	10	
<i>CUPE/CAMA</i>	2002	September	Richmond	15
		November	Kingston	12
	2004	March	Kingston	5
		May	Regina	7
		May	Vancouver	7
		June	Moncton	13
		June	Halifax	5
		June	St-John's	5
	2005	June	Fort Erie	7
June		Grand Prairie	5	
TOTAL	43 WORKSHOPS			468 participants



Chart #3 - A union vision of literacy³

Traditional/corporate vision	Union Vision
⇒ Goal: increase productivity	⇒ Goal: empower workers to have more control over their lives and jobs
⇒ Key concern: workplace training to build job skills	⇒ Key concern: build skills for members as workers, citizens, family, union members
⇒ Focus: 'illiteracy' - problem for a few	⇒ Focus: literacy as an issue for everyone
⇒ Skills involved: reading, writing and numeracy	⇒ Skills involved: the range of skills needed for full participation in the workplace, in the union and in society.
⇒ A time-bound program	⇒ Lifelong learning
⇒ Literacy is neutral	⇒ Literacy is political, a tool for social change
⇒ Not necessarily linked to improving communications	⇒ Linked to improving two-way communications (clear language)
⇒ Some programs based on principles of adult education; others on a more traditional, set curriculum model	⇒ Programs based on principles of worker-centred education

³ Part of this vision is spelled out in Resolution #304 (CUPE 2001 National Convention) and elaborated in CUPE literacy courses and Resources. It also corresponds to the CLC labour vision of literacy.

4. Workplace Programs

This section discusses workplace basic skills programs offered to CUPE members, often through joint union-management programs.

OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help CUPE members participate more equitably at work, at home, in the union and in the community• Encourage and support programs for workers to develop the skills they need for a changing workplace and social environment• Promote a union-centred approach to workplace literacy programs• Build the union
STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work in partnership with other organizations• Hold workshops to train union members of joint committees• Share experiences across Locals through printed resources and the Literacy Reference Group• Offer technical support to Locals setting up programs• Develop pilot projects in new areas (eg. Water Certification)
EFFECTIVENESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of participants and programs has increased over time• Participants and their families have benefited• Workplace programs have helped build the union• Programs are increasingly worker/union-centred• Classroom instruction respects the principles of worker-centred education• There are benefits and constraints to employer funded programs
RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop programs in other sectors, building on the CAMA model• Research needs among francophone and bilingual locals• Explore links with aboriginal councils and the aboriginal literacy community• Share program experiences through Division workshops or exchanges• Ensure training for union representatives on joint committees and members of local executives in a union vision of literacy• Train regional staff and bargaining committees to bargain programs

Chart #4 - Benefits and constraints of employer-funded programs



BENEFITS
⇒ Initial access through CAMA to a core of literacy activists not all known to the union.
⇒ Program funding support.
⇒ Easier to secure government funding through joint partnerships.
⇒ Access to CAMA resources and awareness workshops.
⇒ Can provide opportunities to do new things.
CONSTRAINTS
⇒ More difficult to get funding for workplace training in the public sector than it is in the private sector. The same issues exist in both sectors but governments say that matching funds to municipalities are to “build bridges, not people”.
⇒ Training is seen as a management right. This makes it very difficult to negotiate.
⇒ There are often different understandings of what ‘joint’ or ‘equal partnership’ means.
⇒ There are on-going struggles to maintain a joint (equal) approach.
⇒ CUPE members on joint committees, local and national staff as well as Local Executive members require training in a union-centred approach to ensure that the programs will meet the needs of the members and of the union.
⇒ Union staff and/or activists need to invest a lot of time to maintain a union-centred program.

A worker-centred model of workplace literacy means...

- The union is an equal partner with management in decision-making;
- The union involvement is highly visible to learners;
- There is a joint committee with co-chairs; the union co-chair is active and involved;
- Terms of Reference are agreed to jointly as to how the program will operate. These reflect worker-centred education principles;
- Confidentiality of participants is assured;
- The program is accessible - open to all.

5. Integrating Literacy and Clear Language

Integration is about building literacy and clear language into all union activities so that it becomes central to the union agenda, rather than an 'add-on'.

OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build awareness of literacy issues in the union • Build skills and awareness in clear language and design • Integrate literacy and clear language into CUPE structures, policies, programs and practices
STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness building with leadership, staff and activists • Structures established (committee, staff, links to CUPE departments/committees) • Policies developed • Communications (clear language policies, practices, training) • Insertion into union education programs • Visible and empowering 2005 Convention strategy • Workplace programs in literacy and basic skills
EFFECTIVENESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of awareness and support among staff, leadership and activists • Commitment of national leadership • Key structures and policies in place to ensure sustainability • Impact on Union Development • Evidence of/interest in clear language work in other national departments • Clear language resolutions at national convention • Successful pilot projects in locals across the union • Little impact as yet at the Division level - except Nova Scotia
RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to integrate literacy and clear language into the union agenda • Develop a strategy for staff training on literacy and clear language • Integrate literacy and clear language into other education courses • Make a clear statement that literacy is a union priority and re-articulate the union vision of literacy • Ask senior staff for an annual report on efforts to integrate literacy and clear language • Set up an inter-departmental committee to discuss ways to promote clear language contracts • Implement the literacy advocates strategy • Publicize the clear language 'Payroll' pilot project (See case study #4)

Chart #5 - How CUPE made the present level of integration happen

- ⇒ Hired a talented literary coordinator with experience working in CUPE as well as in on-the-ground literacy programs
- ⇒ Situated the program with member education in Union Development
- ⇒ Named the work as 'integration' and developed an outreach strategy
- ⇒ Involved leadership from the beginning and got buy-in
- ⇒ Put together the Literacy Reference Group as an ad-hoc group that could get things going
- ⇒ Used existing partnerships (CLC, CAMA)
- ⇒ Developed a workshop model and resources that promotes a CUPE vision for union-centred workplace programs and explores issues of power
- ⇒ Piloted programs to demonstrate the different ways that CUPE locals could get involved in literacy and clear language
- ⇒ Achieved status for the LRG as a National Working Group with an NEB liaison person as a strategy for connecting to the rest of the organization
- ⇒ Developed and rolled out a convention strategy: resolutions in clear language and a national literacy award

Impact of the program

Impact of literacy on the CUPE agenda and culture



- There is increased awareness of and support for literacy and clear language. Close to 100 percent of evaluation participants felt that literacy is an important union issue while 75 percent said it is as important as health and safety. The vast majority of those contacted knew about the existence of the CUPE literacy program.
- There has been a significant increase in literacy program activities:
 - ⇒ There are more workplace programs with approximately 350 CUPE members participating over the past year.
 - ⇒ 43 literacy and clear language workshops have been run by CUPE for 468 participants. CLC week-long courses have included at least 45 additional CUPE participants.
 - ⇒ Excellent resources have been produced and used both in the CUPE education program and by others in the broader labour literacy network.
 - ⇒ Workshops and other supports were offered to CUPE national departments.
 - ⇒ Sixteen resolutions on literacy and clear language have been passed by national and regional conventions.
 - ⇒ A National Literacy Award was offered for the first time in 2005.
- Workplace programs have benefited CUPE members, their families and the Union. Members have built skills, developed an interest in further learning and improved family relations. Benefits to the union include improved relations with management, good publicity in the community and increased member participation and activists' skills. Clear language communications awareness and skills are helping make the union accessible to more of the membership.
- At the national level there is an articulated union vision of literacy, a significant leadership commitment, a full-time, permanent staff position within Union Development, a Literacy Reference Group with the status of other national committees, an NEB liaison person and policies in place to support literacy and clear language.
- There is uneven integration at the Division Level. However, most CUPE schools now include literacy workshops as part of the curriculum. Nova Scotia and B.C. have passed a significant number of resolutions at convention on literacy and clear language. Impact is greatest where there is a structural connection between the LRG representative and the Division Executive, and a working relationship with the regional education officer.

Impact of the CUPE literacy program on the literacy movement

- CUPE has had a significant influence on the labour literacy agenda. There is recognition of CUPE leadership in this area by other unions, Federations of Labour, by the CLC and by outside resource people. Other unions use CUPE literacy and clear language resources. CUPE's active participation in the CLC Literacy Working Group has resulted in significant CUPE input to most literacy and clear language activities and resources of the Congress.
- Connection to the broader literacy movement has only recently become a priority for CUPE, tied to the union's strategic priority of 'building strong communities'. The major effort in this area was carried out through a successful pilot project in Ontario. CUPE also counts the library sector and literacy workers among its members who could be a future resource for the program.
- There was interest expressed by literacy organizations in having more involvement from CUPE, especially a stronger advocacy role in speaking out in solidarity with literacy workers on common issues. It was also suggested that CUPE is the union of choice to help organize literacy workers who are often low paid, with insecure jobs and poor working conditions.

Lessons Learned

CUPE can be proud of its work in literacy/clear language.

The program has had an impact on members and their families. It has changed peoples' lives. The program has also had an impact on the union and played a role in building new activists.

Buy-in from senior staff and leadership is essential.

The strong support and involvement from CUPE National officers, National Executive Board members, Union Development Directors and other senior staff have been key to the success of the program.

Staff training is a key element in integrating literacy into the union.

Work with national service representatives will be important in helping extend program benefits to many more members. Training with staff in other national departments can help insure the integration of literacy and clear language into other parts of the union agenda.



A structural link is important between the LRG and the Divisions.

This has been a missing link in the program. It is a way of sharing program successes with other Locals in the same Division and motivating additional literacy and clear language activity.

LRG members need links with the regional education representatives.

The regional education representatives are key to ensuring that the literacy education agenda is delivered. They can also provide invaluable support to Locals in the development of basic skills programs in the workplace.

Key activists and staff have moved the agenda forward. Succession planning is important.

Individuals have played key roles in the development of the CUPE literacy program. At the same time, it has meant that parts of the program have been dependent on key individuals. Staff training and awareness sessions for local executive and activists are essential to ensure that others are available to take their place.

The LRG is an effective coordination mechanism.

The Literacy Reference Group has provided a place where literacy activists can support and learn from each other. It has served as both a sounding board for program development and a mechanism for setting program priorities. Other CUPE committees might learn from their experience.

Whatever the workplace program model, the key is a union-centred approach.

It is important that all CUPE members involved in workplace programs receive training on how a union-centred approach differs from the employer model. Mechanisms for exchange and support as programs develop are needed to ensure that the union maintains an equal partnership with management.

Literacy and clear language build the union.

The program is about inclusion and participation – key to organizing the organized. Literacy and clear language are programs that give the union a positive profile with management, with the community, and with members not involved in other union activities.

Working in partnership helps build the program.

CUPE's collaboration with the CLC and CAMA helped the program get off the ground quickly, made valuable resources available to the program – and avoided duplication of effort. Without the funding partnership with the NLS there is agreement that the CUPE national literacy program would not have happened.

Literacy and clear language are about equity and access.

As with other equity issues, language is about power. It can be used to invite or block participation. So paying attention to literacy and clear language moves the equity agenda forward. At the same time, the literacy program needs to use a broader equity lens to monitor access to its activities and who gets to 'teach and learn' in both workplace and literacy education programs.

Literacy and clear language need to be seen as tools to support staff.

Given staff workload, the literacy program needs to demonstrate how literacy and clear language can support ongoing work.

It is important to name, and articulate, a union-vision of literacy.

'Literacy' and 'Clear Language' are not always 'clear'. The evaluation found major differences in what people understood 'literacy' to mean. Rather than abandoning the term, 'literacy' can be reframed as a tool for equity and social change – for reading the world, not just the words.

PART C - FUTURE DIRECTIONS

"Literacy helps ensure dignity and respect for our members. Just like pensions, wages, health and safety – literacy is a part of the rights of workers."

Claude Généreux, CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer

Program Priorities

1. Goals of the program

The goals as stated in Part A (page 5) continue to be relevant and appropriate for the program with two suggestions for improvement:

- a) Add separate goals for clear language with measurable outcomes.
(For example, to write the grievance procedure and standard agreement clauses in clear language.)
- b) Articulate goals for the program within union priorities and strategic directions.

2. Program strategies

The evaluation strongly supports continued partnerships with the CLC, Federations of Labour and CAMA. New emphases suggested include:

- Staff training - key to most of the program activities suggested as future priorities.
- Establishing firmer roots in the Divisions.
- Working with other national committees to increase access to the literacy program for equity seeking groups and to explore ways that literacy and/or clear language activities could assist the equity committees with their work.



3. Program Activities

a) *Focus work in clear language on collective agreements and grievance procedure*

- Develop a training program for staff representatives, designed as part of an overall training strategy by the Union Development Department;
- Set up an inter-departmental committee to look at supports for staff, such as putting standard agreement clauses into clear language;
- Develop more website supports on sample language and companion documents.

b) Expand Workplace Programs

- Research needs among Francophone members for literacy and basic skills training by bringing together interested leadership and staff from francophone and bilingual locals;
- Develop a campaign to bargain workplace training, including literacy and basic skills;
- Expand to new sectors (health care, education), based on the CUPE-CAMA partnership model.

c) Develop policy advocacy work on literacy issues

- Encourage the CLC to bring affiliates on board to advocate for literacy and basic skills programs to meet workers' needs;
- Advocate for Canadian-developed certification exams;
- Advocate at the Division level for increased provincial funding for delivery of basic skills programs;
- Bring labour's voice to community literacy advocacy;
- Develop a CUPE policy in support of a union vision of literacy as a workers' rights/social justice issue.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations to the National Executive Board

1. Based on the evaluation results, the CUPE Literacy Program should be continued and expanded.
2. Support the integration of literacy and clear language into the union agenda by:
 - ⇒ Continuing to house the literacy program within the Union Development Department;
 - ⇒ Making a clear statement that literacy is a union priority and re-articulate the union vision of literacy;
 - ⇒ Asking senior staff for an annual report to the President on efforts to integrate literacy and clear language;
 - ⇒ Setting up an inter-departmental committee to discuss ways to integrate literacy and clear language and in particular, to promote clear language contracts by reworking standard agreement clauses.
3. Explore the possibility of organizing literacy workers, beginning in Ontario and Nova Scotia.
4. Reduce the amount requested from the NLS for core costs (travel, printing, administrative support) and focus the proposal on discrete projects to reduce reporting requirements and dependence on federal funding.
5. Assign additional bilingual administrative support to the Union Development Department to take into account the clerical support required by the literacy program.
6. Fund a pilot project in Nova Scotia to hire a regional literacy coordinator for two years to take advantage of provincial funding for basic skills programs and the NSFL peer learning guide program.
7. Seek to strengthen labour's voice in literacy advocacy by:
 - ⇒ Encouraging the CLC to bring affiliates on board to advocate at both federal and provincial levels for literacy and basic skills programs to meet the needs of workers;
 - ⇒ Advocating in the Divisions for more provincial funding for the delivery of basic skills programs;
 - ⇒ Advocating for more relevant, Canadian-developed certification exams;
 - ⇒ Developing a CUPE policy in support of a union vision of literacy as a workers' rights/social justice issue.

Recommendations to the Literacy Reference Group

8. The Literacy Reference Group is an effective coordination mechanism. Continue the strategies used to date.
9. Explore ways to deepen links between LRG members and their Divisions by:
 - ⇒ Clarifying the reporting role to Division Executive and Convention;
 - ⇒ Creating a one page reporting tool;
 - ⇒ Exploring structural links, which may be different in each region;
 - ⇒ Strengthening working relationships with the regional education staff;
 - ⇒ Continuing and expanding cooperation with the literacy staff and programs of provincial federations.
10. Clarify the future role of the LRG taking into account the needs of the program, the limitations of volunteer time and the accommodation of personal skills and interest.
11. Articulate goals for the program within union priorities and strategic directions.
12. Consider ways to brand the literacy program which would include the concept of literacy as equity and access.

Recommendations to Union Development

On membership education

13. Make literacy and clear language a priority for the work of all Union Development staff.
14. Integrate literacy and clear language into other union development courses as a priority within course development.
15. Schedule member facilitators to co-teach a literacy course within six months of literacy training and introduce them to literacy and clear language resources as part of their training.

16. Continue to offer workshops and courses on clear language and union-based literacy facilitated by union development staff working with member facilitators. To strengthen the impact of the workshops:

- ⇒ Set up a system to track access to literacy courses and to measure impact on the local;
- ⇒ Offer follow-up support to course participants;
- ⇒ Make contact information on course participants available to the LRG representative;
- ⇒ Target more workshops to specific audiences linked to program goals.

On staff training

17. Develop a strategy for staff training on literacy and clear language at all levels, with priority to regional staff representatives.

18. Train regional staff and bargaining committees to bargain programs.

On workplace programs

19. Encourage the development of new workplace programs to meet the needs of members by:

- ⇒ Developing a campaign to bargain workplace training, including literacy and basic skills;
- ⇒ Training regional staff and bargaining committees to bargain programs;
- ⇒ Developing programs in other sectors (education and health), building on the CUPE-CAMA model;
- ⇒ Researching needs among francophone and bilingual Locals;
- ⇒ Sharing program experiences through Division workshops or exchanges among Locals;
- ⇒ Explore links with aboriginal councils and the aboriginal literacy community.

20. Support existing workplace programs by:

- ⇒ Ensuring training for union representatives on joint committees and members of local executives on a union vision of literacy.

On clear language

21. Make the clear language program more focused and strategic by:

- ⇒ Formulating specific goals for clear language;
- ⇒ Giving priority to collective agreement language and the grievance procedure;
- ⇒ Publicizing the clear language 'Pay stubs' pilot project.

On awareness building

22. Continue to build awareness of a union vision of literacy at all levels of the organization by:
- ⇒ Implementing the literacy advocates strategy to promote outreach and awareness training in the Divisions;
 - ⇒ Consulting with CUPE members who are literacy workers to explore how they could play a role in the program;
 - ⇒ Strengthen labour's voice in literacy advocacy;
 - ⇒ Join other literacy organizations and get more active in francophone and native organizations.
23. Continue to use and distribute CUPE, CLC and CAMA resources. To improve the distribution of resources:
- ⇒ Ask Locals to ensure that the Literacy Newsletter gets distributed to local executive and committee members.

On administration

24. Monitor staff time spent on administering the NLS grant.
25. Monitor the workload of the national literacy coordinator to ensure that as new areas of work are added staff capacity is also increased.



APPENDICES

CASE STUDIES

- ① CUPE Local 500, City of Winnipeg
Workplace Essential Skills Program
Bargaining our Right to Education

- ② CUPE Local 21, City of Regina
Workplace Basic Skills Program
Return to Learn

- ③ CUPE Local 759, Cape Breton Regional Municipality
Workplace Basic Skills Program
Building Workplace Education

- ④ CUPE Local 1975
University of Saskatchewan: Food Service Workers
Clear Language Pilot Project
Payroll: Making it Clear

⇒ **Note:** The italics in the case studies indicate quotes from program participants.



Case Study #1 CUPE Local 500 - City of Winnipeg Essential Skills program

BARGAINING OUR RIGHT TO EDUCATION

What this case study is about

This is the story of how one CUPE local bargained an essential skills program as part of a larger training fund and has kept it going for the past six years. CUPE Local 500 represents approximately 5000 fulltime, part-time and seasonal inside and outside workers with the City of Winnipeg. In 2000 the union signed a letter of agreement for a \$3 million Education and Staff Development Fund. As part of the fund, the union successfully pushed for an Essential Skills program with a budget of \$310,000 over the past three years. This includes funding for a half-time coordinator position. The program is directed by an all-union sub-group responsible to the Joint Union-Management Committee.

The program began with a needs assessment that showed the need for GED and basic reading, writing and math. New courses have been added to the program each year, based on participant requests. The curriculum now includes 15 course areas, including computer courses, accounting...and many more. 689 CUPE members have participated in the program.

The classroom program is run by adult educators with experience in other union workplace programs. Recently Local 500 members, trained as Peer Tutors by the program, began to provide support in the classroom for those needing extra help.

In recent negotiations, Local 500 was able to keep funding for the Essential Skills program. However it is too early to tell how the program will be affected by reduced funding and less political support from City Council.

The Local 500 Essential Skills program has received three national literacy awards - and is part of the CUPE-CAMA (Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators) program.



Left to right: Kathy Todd; Gail Stephins, former Chief Administrative Officer, City of Winnipeg; Paul Moist; Glenn Murray, former Mayor of Winnipeg; and Elizabeth Morsette, program participant.

Why the program is important

Union leaders, staff, activists and course participants all agree that the Essential Skills program is becoming even more important given two key issues:

#1: "How to keep our members working".

- ⇒ Certification - Water and waste water locals with an aging workforce are being forced to get certification.
- ⇒ Redeployment - The City recently contracted out waste pick-up. Workers were deployed to other areas of the Water and Waste department where training, and particularly the need to obtain a GED, was important.
- ⇒ Upgrading - e.g. Licensing in Insect Control Division.
- ⇒ Changing technology: Everyone has to work with computers - even blue collar workers.

#2: "The need to respond to a changing membership"

- ⇒ With more aboriginal workers and immigrant workers being hired, essential skills and ESL will be among the needs of new CUPE members.

How the program got started

In 1995 Local 500 had negotiated a small training program of \$250,000 over three years which did not include Essential Skills. *“In 2000, the City of Winnipeg had a newly elected mayor who was very big on training - ‘preparing the workforce for the future’ - and we tapped into that. The Local went into bargaining asking for \$5 million over the life of the agreement - “never dreaming we would even come close”. The letter of agreement was signed for \$3 million.*

“But the resistance was in the “joint” piece. The chief negotiator for their side didn’t want to involve the union in decision-making. We said it had to be joint or we wouldn’t sign. We got our joint committee - but agreed to have a senior body which included the Mayor, the Chief Administrative Officer and the CUPE President as ‘the last resort’ if there were conflicts. This settled management’s fears.” This three-person committee has never been called upon to settle a conflict over the life of the program.

The Essential Skills program was easily agreed to by the Joint Committee. However, there was disagreement on how it would be handled. Management wanted a counseling service for individuals with referrals to outside agencies. During these discussions, three CUPE members of the joint committee were able to attend CUPE’s National Literacy Conference in January 2001. *“When I went to the conference I had no clue about a union agenda for training. We came home determined to fight for our own program.”*

A needs survey found out that 400-500 people could benefit from a GED program. With the help of the CUPE national literacy coordinator and local UFCW contacts, Kathy Todd, working as a volunteer activist on the committee, developed a proposal. With a good degree of skepticism, management agreed to let the union try to deliver the program. *“I think we won through perseverance. We were willing to do the work.”*

How it is funded

In 2000, funding was negotiated as part of a larger joint staff training and development fund, signed as a letter of agreement. The fund was renegotiated in 2003. The Essential Skills program has a budget of 310,500 over 3 years. This includes funds for a half-time coordinator’s position. In 2006 negotiations, with new, more conservative politicians at City Hall, the union was able to keep the funding for the Essential Skills program.

How decisions get made

The Essential Skills Program is coordinated by the Essential Skills Sub-Committee, made up entirely of Local 500 members. Originally there were also two management representatives on the committee but they withdrew. The sub-committee reports to the Joint Committee for Education, Training and Staff Development. This committee is made up of six CUPE and six Management members. There is a part-time coordinator for the Essential Skills Program who is a CUPE member. The Senior Committee of three (Mayor, President of Local 500 and the Chief Administrative Officer) remains the final arbitrator of any conflicts which the Joint Committee is unable to resolve.

Tensions on the committee have included:

- ⇒ Confidentiality (union) and getting the word out as a record of accomplishment (management)
- ⇒ Duplication of courses (management) and 'slowing down' courses offered by management to make them accessible to all learners (union)
- ⇒ A union-only sub-group for Essential Skills. Management found this difficult when everything else was 'joint'

To this point, the union has been able to maintain its position in all three areas.

Links to the CUPE structure

The Local

- ⇒ As part-time staff, the program coordinator reports to the Staff Administrative Officer (SAO) for Local 500 who is also the Union co-chair of the Joint Education Committee. As a table officer she also reports on the program to the Union Executive.

The Division

- ⇒ The program has not had connections within the Division.

The Municipal Sector

- ⇒ As part of the CUPE-CAMA program, the Coordinator has participated in several CAMA conferences and union organized meetings with other CUPE locals involved in CAMA.
- ⇒ The coordinator has also made a presentation to the Municipal Workers Conference in Manitoba.

The CUPE National Literacy Program

- ⇒ The Local 500 Essential Skills Coordinator has been on the National Literacy Working Group since 2002.
- ⇒ The Coordinator has also attended (in 2002), and co-facilitated (in 2003 and 2006) CUPE literacy workshops.
- ⇒ Three Local 500 members on the Joint Education Committee attended the CUPE National Literacy Workshop in January 2001. This was a key moment in the development of the Essential Skills program.
- ⇒ Two Local 500 program instructors attended the 'Seeds for Change' workshop in Winnipeg put on by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in 2002. All course instructors receive a copy of "Seeds for Change".
- ⇒ The National Literacy Coordinator did a workshop with the Essential Skills Committee which helped equalize information among the committee members and focus their planning.

Program content and materials

Following the recommendations of an outside needs assessment at the beginning of the program, the Essential Skills program began with basic workplace skills and GED courses. At the end of each course, there is an evaluation which asks participants what courses they want. Based on participant interest and needs the course selection has been greatly expanded. For example some Local 500 members are now required to get an accounting certification for their jobs which have been reclassified. So the program now includes accounting courses that mirror what members have to learn in college, but slows it down.

The program now also includes:

- ⇒ Introduction to computers and some software
- ⇒ A writing course (Writing Your Memoirs)
- ⇒ Basic skills for Public Works Foreman
- ⇒ The Essential Skills Book Club
- ⇒ Business Correspondence
- ⇒ Dealing with conflict
- ⇒ The "Cabin Fever" series which includes such topics as study skills, dealing with stress and clear language
- ⇒ Peer Tutor training

Recruitment and Selection of program participants

The Essential Skills program is the only part of the overall training program with high union visibility. Information on the program each year is put together by the program coordinator in a separate clear language booklet with both the CUPE and City of Winnipeg logos on it. The program coordinator mails out the information to all Local 500 members in CUPE envelopes. The information is also available in the Local 500 office. Thus the program has a 'union stamp' clearly on it from the outset. The program is also advertised in the *Corporate Education Course Calendar* available from the City's Human Resources Department and in all Human Resources offices of the City.

The Essential Skills program advertises that confidentiality will be respected and learners can work at their own pace. There is no cost to the program, although workers have to take courses on their own time. Participants register through Local 500 - by mail, fax or telephone. Adult family members can apply for most courses - except computers. Selection is on a 'first come first serve' basis. All participants earn certificates and are invited to a party in 'celebration of learning' in the spring. The Mayor and the President of Local 500 are among the invited guests. By all accounts, this is an event not to be missed!

Approach used in the classroom

The program model is based on instructor- led classes in a semester system from September to May. Courses are offered in the evenings and on Saturdays. Courses have been offered at the Union Centre and at the UFCW training centre to help keep the union visible in the program. A difficulty was finding instructors with experience in a union-based model. Local 500 was fortunate in finding UFCW instructors who are highly evaluated by participants and who have stayed with the program. Instructors are paid \$25 per hour, with one hour prep time paid for each hour taught.

The program approach respects the principles of union education.

- *"The program is set up so we can learn from each other, not just the instructor"*
- *"It's an open, safe environment"*
- *" It's non-competitive -everyone is at the same level"*
- *"We get lots of recognition"*
- *"I could work at my own pace; it makes learning fun"*

The program is beginning to use members as peer tutors as well. Five tutors were trained as part of the Essential Skills program. The peer tutors were very highly evaluated by the learners in the program. However, because they need to contribute their time voluntarily it has been difficult to keep them in the program.

At the moment the program takes anyone who is interested in becoming a peer tutor. However, there may need to be some criteria developed as well as a transparent selection process.

Benefits and impacts of the program

For the participants

- ⇒ They developed career-related skills and moved up in their jobs. The program helped with changing job requirements
- ⇒ People were motivated to learn more. The program builds a culture of on-going learning. *"I got excited about math!"*
- ⇒ For many participants the program built confidence
- ⇒ For many there was a sense of personal development and accomplishment. *"I had two kids when I was young. They are both professionals. I did this for myself"*
- ⇒ This program breaks the cycle. *"Because I went back, my girls are now going back to get their GED – I was the role model..."*
- ⇒ There are benefits for all parts of life – not just at work. *"I can read to my six-year old grandchild and it is harder for him to correct me"*
- ⇒ The program improved family relations *"One guy got into our program because he had to buy a computer for his son"*
- ⇒ *"The Essential Skills program reached a group of people who were isolated and vulnerable among our members and gave them hope and real opportunity to change their lives"*

For the union

- ⇒ It brings us back to the membership. *"Members and their families see CUPE – it advertises the union"*
- ⇒ It improved relations with management. *"We have jointly agreed to other projects I never would have thought possible earlier – because of the job we've done on this program." "Management informally learns more about the union structure and what we do"*
- ⇒ It's good publicity – *"Helps show the community what the union does"*
- ⇒ There has been evidence of increased participation in union activities *"Some participants attended rallies around contracting out garbage collection), more members came out to vote for the first time; they take an interest in bargaining and are more likely to put in proposals and to vote for a package"*
- ⇒ It encourages new activists – some went on to do Stewards training. *"She wants to pay the union back for what she has gotten out of the program"*
- ⇒ Participants are more aware of the location of the union centre and of the union in general
- ⇒ The program builds the skills of activists (to write grievances, computer skills etc. *"I became a Trustee because I could do the accounting after doing the course"*
- ⇒ This program answers the question: *"What is the union doing for me?"*

What helped make the program a success

- ⇒ As in many programs an individual can make a real difference. The commitment and skills of the program coordinator, Kathy Todd, were identified as key to the success of the program. In addition to her part-time, paid hours, she contributed many hours of volunteer time.
- ⇒ The supportive nature of the program - the personal contact and accessibility of the coordinator to answer questions and assist with problems. *"She is open to suggestions; you can get her day and night; she is responsive..."*
- ⇒ The program was bargained by the Local as part of a major training package. There are no costs for courses or books.
- ⇒ Confidentiality was critical. Many people were concerned that their boss or co-workers would find out that they were upgrading their basic skills and that it might have a negative effect on them in the workplace.
- ⇒ Good instructors with a grounding in the principles of union education were key. Peer tutors were mentioned by learners as an element to develop further.

Advice to others

- ⇒ You have to know what the members want (through some ongoing needs assessment and evaluation) or they won't come to the courses.
- ⇒ Be prepared for a lot of hard work.
- ⇒ One model doesn't fit everyone.
- ⇒ Start small so you can figure out what works and what doesn't.
- ⇒ Educate your local and get the National to help. We were weak here. Union members on the joint committees should have training before they get into the program.
- ⇒ Promote the program in the Local.
- ⇒ Take care in hiring instructors. Touch base with another union-based program. It is difficult to find and keep good instructors.
- ⇒ It is important to understand the politics. If literacy activists are totally unaware of the politics of their Local, politics with management and the politics between their local and the provincial Division, they may come out with less than desirable results. They may talk to the wrong person first or align themselves with someone a person in power views as a threat.
- ⇒ Get into the drivers seat on skills training - or management will. We can see future needs where management cannot.
- ⇒ Identify allies on their side, often Human Resources people.
- ⇒ Promote this as NOT school. Here you can learn at your own pace and use it as a springboard for learning.



Future challenges

Sustainability

- ⇒ Financial, given the nature of the new City Council
- ⇒ Political – maintaining the union stamp on the Essential Skills program; keeping union values and principles at the centre of the program
- ⇒ Organizationally – should the Coordinator change, a new person may not be willing or able to contribute the volunteer time which has been an important factor in the success of this program

Succession planning

- ⇒ The program coordinator needs to sit down with the Committee and develop a plan for passing on information and getting other people involved in doing parts of the program. Some concrete suggestions included writing a ‘how to’ manual and a workshop for key people in the Local

Promotion of the program

- ⇒ In the Local, the Division, other sectors and in the community

Making the program more accessible

- ⇒ To aboriginal people, those with disabilities and people of colour who do not access the program now in any numbers
- ⇒ Bargaining time off (one hour paid by management for every hour of course time volunteered by the worker-participant)



Case Study #2 CUPE Local 21 - City of Regina

RETURN TO LEARN

What this case study is about

This is the story of how an individual CUPE member with a passion for literacy, a manager with a commitment to literacy, a union-sensitive educator, and a Provincial Federation of Labour got together to create a dynamic workplace program called 'Return to Learn'.

Local 21 represents 1,377 outside workers with the City of Regina. In 2002 at the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) conference in Richmond BC, an activist from Local 21 and two management representatives met for the first time and agreed to try to develop a workplace basic skills program. They formed a joint committee and successfully sought funding from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS). This allowed them to hire two consultants to help develop the program. The first, Patti Kelm, was responsible for the design and implementation of a Needs Assessment. The second, Naomi Frankel, a union-sensitive educator, designed and coordinated the 'Return to Learn' program.

'Return to Learn' is based on a peer tutor model. Five Local 21 members were trained by the consultant with assistance from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's WEST program coordinator. After an unsuccessful general recruitment, the Joint Committee decided to offer the program to water sewage treatment workers facing Certification exams. 16 participants signed up.

The content of the program was largely based on what participants brought to the group and wanted to learn. It included skills development in areas like writing, math, critical thinking, problem solving and exam preparation tips. Three peer tutors worked in the classroom with the support of the program Coordinator. Classes were held for two hours a week over six weeks.

An evaluation, completed in April 2004, confirmed the success of the pilot program. However, changes in Human Resources staff have negatively affected management commitment to the program. Meanwhile the joint committee has continued to meet and Local 21 is exploring options to ensure that there is some continuing program to offer their members.

Why the program is important

A specific issue in the City of Regina, as in other municipalities, is the significant number of water workers facing the need to be certified who do not have their high school. In addition the future workforce in Saskatchewan will include many more aboriginal workers. A Basic Skills program is one vehicle to help support these workers. Union and management agreed that a workplace program was needed to meet current needs and to encourage a climate of lifelong learning.

How the program got started

“At the Western Municipal Conference in 2002, Gail Lasiuk (Saskatchewan Rep on the National Literacy Working Group) spoke about the CUPE literacy program. Afterwards, I told her how I carried a book around all the time and how four different guys came up to say they had literacy issues. I took some time with them and found it very rewarding. Gail told me about the CAMA conference coming up in Richmond BC and I decided to get some union support to go. I met Brian and Maureen from Management there – and we agreed to try to get a workplace program started here in the city.”

David Storey from Local 21 and Brian Hamblin, head of Corporate Services and on the board of CAMA, became the first co-chairs of the Joint Education Committee. David sold the program to the Local and got two volunteers for the union side of the Committee. He also contacted Ron Torgerson from the SFL WEST program to get advice on how to proceed. Brian recruited two additional management representatives from Human Resources and Engineering for the Joint Committee.

The Joint Committee began by coming up with some Terms of Reference. Human Resources then developed a funding proposal to present to the NLS, rushing to meet the application deadline. The union signed off on the proposal but felt that next time they should be more actively involved in its development

The next stage was the hiring of consultants which was done jointly. The original idea was to hire one person to do both the needs assessment and then develop the program. However, there was disagreement between union and management about who to hire, so in the end one consultant was hired to do the Needs Assessment and the other to develop the program. Following the completion of the Needs Assessment (which everyone found too broad to help provide a focus), the program consultant presented the Joint Committee with three options – two focusing on GED preparation and the third (selected) was the ‘Return to Learn Network’.

How it is funded

The program was funded through a \$50,000 grant from the National Literacy Secretariat with a \$5000 contribution from both the union and from management.

How decisions get made

There are six members on the Joint Education Committee: three from Local 21 and three from Management. There are union and management co-chairs. David Storey, the original union co-chair, was a member of the Local 21 executive. He has been replaced by Alie Dobbs who is an executive member at large of the Local. However it is not necessary to be on the executive to be a member of the joint committee.

Decisions are made by consensus. There are written committee guidelines (Terms of Reference) which have been revisited when new members join the committee. These emphasize commitment, equality, taking risks and the value of all comments and ideas.

Tensions on the committee have been around the following areas:

- ⇒ Use of peer tutors. Management was skeptical and would have preferred using SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Arts, Science and Technology). The union was strongly in favour of the peer tutor approach.
- ⇒ The amount of time it took to get going – frustration on the union side
- ⇒ Confidentiality of learners – Human Resources originally wanted participants to register with them.
- ⇒ Withdrawal of support from Human Resources management staff.

Links to the CUPE structure

The Local

- ⇒ All three union representatives on the Joint Committee are currently members of the Union Executive. (Two are trained peer tutors and one was a learner in the program).
- ⇒ The Union Co-Chair makes a formal report at every Executive Committee meeting. She also reports to membership meetings and takes questions.

The Division

- ⇒ There has not been any contact at the Divisional Level.

CUPE National Literacy Program

- ⇒ Gail Lasiuk, a member of the National Literacy Working Group, played a role in encouraging a Local 21 member to attend a conference in Richmond co-sponsored by CAMA and CUPE where the idea of the program was born.
- ⇒ David Storey, the Local 21 representative, attended a one day workshop for CUPE conference participants in advance of the Richmond conference where he learned about potential resources to support a Local 21 initiative, including the WEST program.
- ⇒ The Union Co-Chair has recently contacted the National Literacy Program coordinator – using sample bargaining language from the website, sending a sample of the Joint Committee Terms of Reference, getting copies of the Literacy Newsletter and other publications.

Program content and materials

Over the 6 weeks of the program, basic skills covered included:

- ⇒ Lifelong Learning (Finding what you need in a document, tips for exam preparation, coping with exam anxiety, study skills)
- ⇒ Critical Thinking (informal learning, getting recognition in the workplace, redesigning my workplace, what we need from the employer and from the union to help us get certification and reach other learning goals)
- ⇒ Problem solving and decision-making
- ⇒ Numeracy – related to water certification
- ⇒ Written Communication (accident reports, letter writing, clarifying thoughts by expressing them in writing)

The program also invited two guests to talk with participants from the Sask Environment and the Water Operators Certification Board, and the President of the Sask Water and Wastewater Association.

Materials and situations were drawn from both the union and the workplace. For example, there was one exercise to get people familiar with the collective agreement and another on how to write a letter to your health and safety rep about a problem. One peer tutor remarked that *“using workplace documents was great. Some are difficult, like accident reports, and working with them we could see the lights go on for participants.”*

Recruitment and Selection of Program Participants

The Joint Committee did an initial round of recruitment using posters, a promotion article in the Local 21 newsletter and individual promotion by the five peer tutors and members of the joint committee. However, close to the starting date, only one worker had expressed definite interest in participating. The Joint Committee decided to offer the program to water sewage treatment workers who were facing mandatory certification exams. Many of these workers had been out of school for some time.

The Program Coordinator, one of the Peer Tutors and the Human Resources staff from management did a presentation to potential participants and came up with a creative way to handle the sign-up for the program. *“We had a sign-up for a draw for SFL sweatshirts. The idea was you could also then sign up for the program if you wanted to. That made it confidential. We had 16 sign up.”*

Everyone who wanted to participate was accepted. Most participants were older men but also included three younger workers. The sole woman in the course and the only participant whose first language was not English was also not a water worker. However, the peer tutor model meant that there was always someone who could work with her when she needed extra help.



Approach used in the classroom

The program was based on 'emergent curriculum' where the class content is not pre-set and comes at least in part from the learners, drawing on real, day-to-day issues and materials. Below is one example to learn about problem solving.

"We offered a standard problem-solving process (which the participants had never seen) and suggested the topic they might use in working through the process. This topic was suggested through an introduction about how it's often the workers who know best how to design various work processes because they're the ones doing the work and know first hand what the problems are. So we asked: Do you have any processes or things in your workplace that you think are problems? (This caused a lot of laughter – people couldn't wait to get started!). We then asked: what are the problems? How would you redesign to improve or get rid of the problem? Then the participants decided which of the many problems to focus on and tackled it using the handout with the problem solving process."

To implement the program, 'Return to Learn' drew on peer tutors working with the adult educator consultant. Five members of Local 21 completed the five day training program as peer tutors with time paid by the City. Consultant Naomi Frankel and Ron Torgerson – WEST Coordinator at the SFL – co-facilitated the training. The peer tutors had to learn the difference between teaching and facilitating and how to work with emergent curriculum in a learner-centred program. Three of the five union members who were trained as peer tutors facilitated in the classroom, while the other two were used as back-up. The peer tutors were highly evaluated by the participants and by the coordinator. The only tension occurred because of a confusion of roles when a peer tutor offered to assist participants in writing a letter to their manager. The coordinator was able to step in and clarify that this was not the role of the tutor and could jeopardize the program.

Benefits and impacts of the program

For the participants

⇒ Built solidarity

"I have worked with this guy a long time and never knew what he thought about this and he thinks like me!"

⇒ Helped build some basic skills related to the needs of participants in a safe and comfortable environment

(In their final evaluation, participants particularly mentioned navigating documents, writing skills and problem solving.)

⇒ Skills for writing exams

"We are starting to write our exams in Sewer and Water so we really appreciated the practical advice – like when you are stuck on one question don't stay there."

For the union

- ⇒ One participant and one peer tutor went onto the Executive; some other members are interested in becoming peer tutors
- ⇒ Made the union more visible to the members
- ⇒ *Peer tutors are a good way to make the union visible*
- ⇒ Developed the capacity and a model (including an evaluation report) to offer similar programs in the future with trained peer tutors
- ⇒ This program has kept training on the union agenda

What helped make the program a success

- ⇒ Hiring a union-sensitive consultant (Naomi Frankel) was key. She developed and coordinated a program that both met the needs of the learners and helped build capacity in the union.
- ⇒ There was support from the Coordinator of the WEST program at the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour in the form of:
 - Advice to Local 21 activist, David Storey in getting the program off the ground;
 - Assistance with the training of peer tutors.
- ⇒ The program was facilitated by Local 21 members and focused on the immediate learning needs of the participants. *“Peer tutors are great! They know how to adapt to us as learners. I worry that outside teachers would just teach like in school and not adapt to what we need.”*
- ⇒ Learners and peer tutors got the time off with pay to attend classes.

Advice to others

- ⇒ *Both union and management need to educate their constituencies about the program.*
- ⇒ *You need to do outreach. Face- to- face recruitment (using the peer tutors) is more effective than posters or Newsletters.*
- ⇒ *Use examples of current workplace materials in the classroom. It has immediate benefits for the participants.*
- ⇒ *Not having time off work limits who can/will attend. So make a business case to the supervisors at the outset and get their support.*
- ⇒ *If you can, build in some follow-up support or mentoring to help people transfer their new skills to the workplace or the union.*

Future Challenges

Sustainability

A key issue is who will be the driver on the management side given lack of support for continuing the program from Human Resources. The Union is committed to trying to continue some level of programming and to the training of more peer tutors. The key role played by the outside consultant in the pilot project would need to be considered in any future program.

Sharing experiences with other parts of CUPE

Several of those interviewed noted that the program would have benefited from contact with other parts of CUPE – within the Division and with other workplace programs. Literacy Activists in Local 21 might also be given support to attend workshops and conferences to help them make contact with other locals.

The Local 21 experience would also be of interest to other locals. For example, a presentation might be made at the Divisional Conference or through the Municipal Sector Conference. One proposal was to hold a three-day regional conference for Locals with interest/experience in setting up workplace programs.



Case Study #3 CUPE Local 759 - Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM)

BUILDING WORKPLACE EDUCATION

What this case study is about

This is a story of an award-winning literacy and basic skills program for CUPE members in Local 759 in Cape Breton. Local 759 has 320 members (only 21 of them women) working in 11 worksites. In early 2001, CUPE circulated a questionnaire throughout the workplace to see if members needed and wanted skills upgrading. The response was overwhelming.

CUPE and the Department of Education then approached management at Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) who agreed to get involved in a program. A joint committee was set up to include representatives from CUPE local 759, the Skills Development Officer of the Nova Scotia Department of Education and CBRM management.

First, the Department of Education did a Needs Assessment. Based on the results, the Committee decided to offer a basic computer course and a basic skills upgrading course to prepare students to eventually write the GED. The program has held two or three courses a year. To date, about 70 CUPE members have participated in the program. Some classes are also open to family members. The classroom program is currently run by two adult educators who are members of the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia

Local 759 also took advantage of a partnership program between CUPE and the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour (NSFL). This program trains workers as learning guides for others in their workplace. Three peer learning guides from Local 759, with costs paid by management, joined participants from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and the Communications, Energy and Paper workers Union (CEP) in the first NSFL five day training program in January 2005. The future goal is to have peer learning guides working with the educators in the classroom.

This program won the 2005 CAMA (Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators) award for best program in 2005. It appears to have a bright future, with continued support from both management and the union.

Why the program is important

Nova Scotia is one of only four provinces that provide some funding for workplace-based education. This is partly in response to the greater need for literacy and basic skills programs in Nova Scotia compared to some of the 'have' provinces. CUPE is trying to tap into these funds to address the problems faced by many of its members.

In Cape Breton as in other areas, workplace demands are also changing. Even the lowest paid workers doing manual labour need minimum education levels. While the actual job may not demand it, workers are required to interact with new rules, regulations and even demands for certification to meet new job safety requirements.

How the program got started

There was an earlier GED program in Local 759 in the late 1990's, run by management and funded through the Department of Education. Following the termination of that program, executive members of Local 759 had tried to get training for heavy equipment operators but the employer was not interested. In 2004, John Evans, an Executive member of the Local, heard a complaint from an older worker who couldn't get job postings because of the GED requirement. When the executive did a membership survey to look into the issue, they found there were many others in the same position. CUPE regional education representative, Gloria Charsley, set up a meeting with the Director of Human Resources for the CBRM, Angus Fleming, the Skills Development Officer of the Department of Education, Raymond Lefort, and Local 759 executive members John Evans, Mike Mombourquette and Allan Clarke. The NSFL Literacy Coordinator, Linda Wentzel, was also invited to the meeting to help make the future link to the peer learning guide program. This meeting convinced management to get on board

The Local was on side.

The members passed a motion on the floor to set up an education fund by taking \$2 off wages every month. However the employer refused, saying they couldn't do that. So we voted instead to increase our union dues. We did have to deal with some resistance: Some members said: I am not going to pay for someone to take my job; I won't fund a program I can't use. However, in the end the motion passed easily.

How it is funded

The Nova Scotia Department of Education pays 100 per cent of the program costs over the first year – and then the employer contribution begins to grow until the program is completely funded by the employer. After three years, the employer contribution is now at twenty percent.

The government contribution has paid for the instructor preparation time and wages. Management has provided facilities, paid for the computer lab fees and the costs of administering the government funds. The union purchased the GED books for participants and contributes countless hours of volunteer labour to administer the program in key areas like recruitment, locating and following-up with instructors.

The employer also paid the costs, including lost wages, for three union members who took part in the week-long Peer Learning Guide program of the NSFL in 2005.

How decisions get made

As mentioned earlier, the joint committee set up to get the program underway included management, CUPE Local 759 representatives, and the Department of Education. One representative on the union side, John Evans, is on temporary assignment as a staff representative. Mike Mombourquette continues to represent the union side. Once the program got underway, the instructors and learner representatives were added to the committee to ensure input from all of those involved in the program. However, during the last round of courses these meetings did not take place on a regular basis. While problems could be taken (and were) to Mike Mombourquette as union representative on the joint committee, there were no regular meetings to share how things were going.

Links to the CUPE structure

The Local

⇒ Representatives on the joint committee are also Executive Committee members and report back to Executive and membership meetings. Barbara Sutherland-Foote, trained as a peer tutor, is also an Executive member.

The Division

⇒ There have been informal links through Danny Cavanagh, Division Executive member, who gave advice on the program.

CUPE National Literacy Program

- ⇒ CUPE National was the first partner in the NSFL peer learning guide program with the provincial government. The national literacy coordinator and two national education staff were instrumental in the development, funding and production of the Peer Learning Guide materials.
- ⇒ Gloria Charsley, CUPE National Atlantic Education Representative, introduced Local 759 to the NSFL peer learning guide program, inviting the NSFL literacy coordinator to the first meeting. Gloria is also a staff support person on the Literacy Reference Group. She attended a CLC Literacy course which she credits as motivating her to get more heavily involved in the literacy program.

Program content and materials

The two courses that have been part of the program are:

- ⇒ Preparing for the GED (with an emphasis on basic skills of reading, spelling and mathematics).
- ⇒ Introduction to computers.

There are discussions underway to run a more advanced computer course. The learners requested a 'Part two' to the course – but for the Department of Education to fund it, the course must be needed in your job.

GED books were purchased by the union for all course participants. The first course was exclusively focused on GED. The second time there was more on workplace skills, union materials, memos etc. The computer course used an illustrated handbook developed by the instructor. The instructor included work-related and personal scenarios to make the sessions more relevant and interesting.

Recruitment and Selection of Program Participants

To promote the program the union members on the joint committee posted notices in the workplace and distributed a flyer describing the program. Confidentiality was assured since the registration is handled by the union.

Everyone who wanted to participate was accepted into the program. Once the first 'graduates' raved about how good the course was, there was a waiting list for the computer course. However, there has been trouble filling the GED course. Some of the barriers include:

- ⇒ Time schedules with people on shifts.
- ⇒ Fear of going back to school for older workers.
- ⇒ Reluctance to take a GED course even with confidentiality assured.

To increase participation, better incentives were suggested, such as two of six hours paid time and four volunteered by the students. There might also be more communication about other workplace skills (apart from the GED) and why they are important. It was also suggested that course graduates might be used in a more systematic way to promote the program with fellow workers.

Approach used in the classroom

In both the computer and GED classes, there was a great deal of individual instruction. In the GED classes this was possible due to small class size (maximum of 5-6 participants). In the computer class, with 10 participants, the instructor was able to contact each participant from her machine at the front of the class. *“The instructor came around to each participant for individual attention. If that student was doing something interesting, we would all be invited to come over and have a look.”*

The instructors tried to respond to the needs of the learners. The GED program is 80% student driven and 20% teacher driven. The instructor tried to balance student needs (GED) with the push by the employer and the union to do something more general around workplace skills. The students often wanted to focus on the diploma rather than the skills. Both course instructors tried to create a relaxed atmosphere where students could learn at their own pace. The computer instructor stresses to students that she doesn't mind being stopped, and operates the program as if no one has seen a computer before. Those with more experience are given projects on the internet.



Left to right: Gloria Charsley, education representative; John Evans, 759; Barbara Sutherland-Foote, 759; Shirley Samson, 5050; Mike Momberquette, 759; Jamie Swain, 5050.

Three Local 759 activists (John Evans, Mike Mombourquette and Barbara Sutherland-Foote) were trained as peer learning guides as part of the NSFL program. All three evaluated the training highly and said that it gave them more self-confidence and had benefits for all of their union work. The training was also important in building solidarity across unions. *The experience taught me that all unions are the same. What I mean is that while we all have different names (i.e. CUPE, CEP, CUPW), we are all fighting for the same things – fairness and respect.*

The peer tutors would be a very valuable resource for the classroom program and make the union role more visible. Those trained said that a major barrier to their ability to work in the classroom is lack of time, given other responsibilities. This might argue for training more peer tutors to include those with specific interest in working in the classroom.

Benefits and impacts of the program

For the participants

- ⇒ One participant was able to help his son with computers and was proud that he knew more than his family did.
- ⇒ *I got some calculator skills; a bit of language; I passed social studies and part of English when I wrote the GED.*
- ⇒ Some participants were able to get their GED.
- ⇒ Some participants were able to get job promotions.
- ⇒ *My kids say that now we can't get Dad off the computer...*
- ⇒ *The computer lets us keep in touch with our families, send them notes and pictures.*
- ⇒ We see the confidence go up when people go back into the classroom. They feel good about themselves – sometimes get involved in further training.

For the union

- ⇒ Some participants in the program began to come to union meetings.
- ⇒ *Participants were grateful – we saw the course was possible because of the union.*
- ⇒ The union internet list grew as a result of the training.
- ⇒ Positive impact on union-management relations reported from both union and management.

What helped make the program a success

- ⇒ Committed activists on the union side willing to put in a lot of work.
- ⇒ The union pushed to get the program going. Then union activists took responsibility for finding instructors, recruiting and selecting participants, doing the follow-up etc.
- ⇒ Funding support from the provincial government.
- ⇒ Provided the impetus for the program and helps ensure that the program is sustainable.
- ⇒ Support from the Local.

- ⇒ Good union-management relations.
- ⇒ Commitment from management, including their willingness to gradually increase support to ensure sustainability of the program.
- ⇒ Good instructors.

Advice to others

- ⇒ *Talk to as many people as you can who have programs going.*
- ⇒ *You plant the seed but then it has to be watered. Be ready to put in some work.*
- ⇒ *Don't quit! It took us one year to start up.*
- ⇒ *Let participants know what is expected of them – that they have to take this seriously. They should also let their families know this will take some of their time. Otherwise you will have dropouts.*
- ⇒ *Spend time getting good instructors.*
- ⇒ *Be sure to get the union on side.*
- ⇒ *Management needs to educate on their side as well – especially middle management people.*
- ⇒ *When you have a lot of people on different shifts and from different areas, have participants get together and work out their own class schedules with the instructor. We tried to do the scheduling the first time around and it was a disaster.*

Future Challenges

Promotion of the GED program

The joint committee could explore different ways to address the barriers to participation in this program. Some suggestions were mentioned earlier. Other ideas could be gathered from other CUPE workplace programs that have faced similar problems. For example, a course might be offered for night shift workers. Or one group of staff might be targeted for interest in forming a class. For example, cleaning staff, who are mostly women on night shift, might also be a way to involve more women in the program.

Expanding the kinds of training available

The program might expand to include other areas such as reading documents and manuals. Exploring the courses offered by other CUPE workplace programs might be a way to gather possibilities. Then a short membership survey could identify those of most interest to Local 759 members.

Getting peer learning guides into the classroom

It would increase the visibility of the union and help the learning process to have peer learning guides working with the instructors in the classroom. This may mean training more union activists as peer learning guides. Two of the activists trained in the past program are on the union executive and involved in running the workplace program which is already a heavy time commitment.

Increased support to instructors

The CUPE national literacy program will provide a copy of the book 'Seeds for Change' to all program instructors. This helps instructors in a practical way understand a union approach to workplace literacy. As the program matures, it is important to maintain joint meetings with instructors and learners as a place to share how the program is going.



Case Study #4 CUPE Local 1975 - University of Saskatchewan Food Service Workers

PAYROLL: MAKING IT CLEAR

What this case study is about

"I now understand the importance of literacy and adult education. Through this project, I was able to connect in different and substantial ways with members in the local."

This is the story of how a CUPE local used clear language to address a complex payroll problem. CUPE Local 1975 at the University of Saskatchewan has 1800 members. The Local had been trying for several years to find ways to improve conditions for 150 Food Service workers who face unique disadvantages in the workplace. When payroll problems emerged as a widespread concern the union tried a variety of strategies with little success.

A union steward who is also a member of the National Literacy Working Group helped initiate a clear language project to get members involved in the issue. With funding from the national literacy project, a literacy & clear language workshop was held with 12 food service workers who agreed to help define the pay stub problem and come up with possible solutions. From their detailed discussions they were able to create a one page summary of the problem and why it was important to them. The group also came up with a proposed solution - to create a logbook to reconcile the complex monthly pay stubs. With the help of an adult educator the logbook was drafted and piloted by the food service workers. When the final product was distributed, workers lined up for their copies.

A major intent of the project was to demonstrate how clear language can be applied to union issues. Food Service workers were involved in two clear language workshops, one combined with CUPE's "Know Your Rights" training. There were also presentations to the membership and management about union based literacy and clear language.

The next stage of the project is to train Stewards who will then help local members to use the Log Book.

History of the project

In November 2002 there was a “Big Meeting’ where Food Service members challenged Local Union leaders with a list of problems. As a result the Grievance Committee formed a think tank on these issues. In February 2003, the Union set up a week-long table to collect input on food service problems. One area of frustration for many workers was their pay stub. They were unable to track and verify their pay each month. They are casual and part-time workers. Many held two positions at the same time, and they face three layoff cycles each year.

In response the union tried several strategies. First, they tried problem solving strategies with three levels of management. When this didn’t work, the union filed a grievance on pay stub problems, and sought an interpretation from Saskatchewan Labour Standards. New union stewards were trained from Food Services and relevant bargaining proposals were drafted and submitted. The failure of these strategies prompted Gail Lasiuk, a member of the National Literacy Working Group, to frame the payroll problem as a learning project. The Literacy Program Coordinator suggested a 'clear language demonstration project' as a way to involve members in the issue. The project was initiated in June of 2004.

Why the project is important

Below are the points the workers drew up in their first workshop about why this issue was important to them. They call it their "manifesto" and it is widely used as a tool to talk about the project and to demonstrate the power of clear language:

- ⇒ *The project is about gathering information so that we know we are getting paid for the hours we work. Pay stubs are written in technical language, not clear language.*
- ⇒ *Food Service workers face three lay-off periods per year. This complicates issues even more. Therefore we need to be able to verify the details of our pay.*
- ⇒ *We want to have confidence in the system. But we are not able to understand pay stub information and the systems. We don’t know if we are short pay.*
- ⇒ *This is about our livelihood and we are afraid because we cannot understand the stub. Why should we be short on our pay? And why should we have to be our own payroll administrators?*
- ⇒ *It is our right to have a clearly written pay stub. Just because we are a minority in the larger university payroll system, it does not mean we should not have a clear pay stub.*

How it was funded

The Local was given \$3000 from the National Literacy Program to hire an adult educator for the project. The Local paid for lost wages and related expenses for two workshops and cost shared the production of the Log Book with the employer and the National Literacy Program. They also shared expenses to send a Food Service member to a week long school on literacy and clear language.

Links to the CUPE structure

The Local

⇒ The project was initiated and run by two stewards. The Local also assisted with the funding of the project.

The Division

- ⇒ The CUPE Regional Education Representative agreed to co-facilitate the second Clear Language workshop by adapting parts of the CUPE course “Know Your Rights”.
- ⇒ There was no reporting mechanism to link to other parts of the Division.

CUPE National Literacy Program

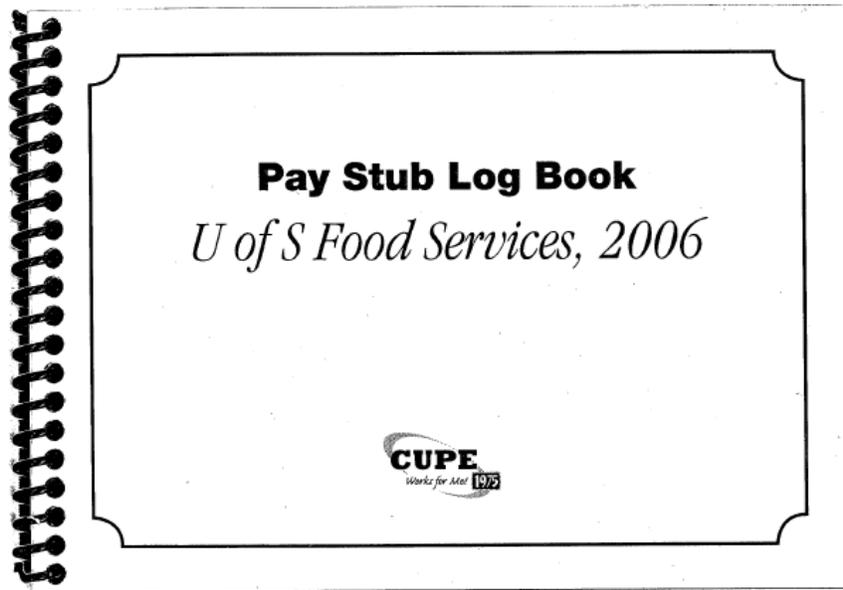
- ⇒ Gail Lasiuk who helped coordinate the project, is a member of the National Literacy Working Group and reported back to those meetings on the progress of the project.
- ⇒ The National Literacy Program provided part of the funding.
- ⇒ The original idea for a clear language project and support at every stage came from the National Literacy Coordinator.
- ⇒ As part of the project one of the Senior Stewards from Food Services (Jules Dinter) was sent to a week-long literacy course run by CUPE national and became the project coordinator.
- ⇒ Materials from the CLC Clear Language binder were used in the training.

The process and activities

The process involved Food Service members at all stages of the project.

- ⇒ Twelve Food Service workers were identified who had problems with their pay stubs and they agreed to be part of the project.
- ⇒ A two-day workshop was held to talk about clear language and to discuss the problems with the pay stubs and why the issue was important. On the second day the group discussed possible solutions to the problems and came up with the idea of a Log Book. This workshop was co-facilitated by the two initiating stewards, and two outside resource people gave presentations.

- ⇒ An adult educator was hired to implement the union's ideas. This pro-union teacher was vital to putting clear language into practice. She used clear language in these ways: to help frame the problem and solutions; to summarize relevant parts of the collective agreement; to create a step by step math guide for reconciling pay information; to suggest changes to the Pay Roll department for their computer programming; and to design the log book.
- ⇒ A Log Book was drafted by the educator, piloted by the Food Service workers and then revised.
- ⇒ A second clear language workshop with additional participants was held, combined with CUPE's "Know Your Rights" training.



There were also presentations on clear language to get buy-in from both the union and from management:

- ⇒ There were discussions with the local union Executive, Grievance Committee, and the general membership to seek funding and support.
- ⇒ There were two presentations to management to ensure their "buy-in".
- ⇒ The project also demonstrated clear language principles to payroll administrators and suggested plain language wording to replace their computer jargon. This did result in some changes to the pay stubs themselves.

Benefits and impacts of the program

For the participants

- ⇒ Twelve food service workers were led through a clear language approach to addressing a workplace problem.
- ⇒ The knowledge of Food Service workers was solicited to shape the clear language strategies at every step.

- ⇒ A practical and sustainable tool was created to assist workers with their pay stubs.
- ⇒ *We grew in our own understanding of payroll problems and of our role in the workplace.*
- ⇒ *We have empowered ourselves by producing our own practical solution to the problem.*
- ⇒ *We have increased confidence in our ability to take action to improve our working conditions.*

For the union

- ⇒ The Union Executive and Grievance Committee have a better understanding of why Food Service workers are being denied their rights under the collective agreement. As a result the union is better able to advocate on behalf of Food Service workers.
- ⇒ Experienced activists got new energy. *"I would love to participate in other ways: for example, work with Aboriginal people in our workplace."*
- ⇒ New activists came into this project who had not participated in any other union event.
- ⇒ The project provided a concrete and visible union response to a widespread concern of Food Service workers. As one worker said as she picked up her copy of the Log Book: *It is so good that someone is finally taking up our problem!*
- ⇒ The union now has a well-documented model for other potential uses of clear language.

What helped make the project a success

- ⇒ Food Service workers were involved in defining the problem and the solution.
- ⇒ The link between the program initiators in the Local and the National Literacy program enabled funding, advice and access to resources.
- ⇒ The involvement of the CUPE Regional Education Representative enabled the link between clear language and workers' rights.
- ⇒ The project promoted clear language as the way to solve a specific problem – rather than as yet another 'add-on' to already overworked union activists.
- ⇒ It provided an opportunity for activists to learn from each other. *"I got to work with more experienced literacy activists and educators. It challenged me to look at the world in new ways."*
- ⇒ The adult educator hired was a union person. As a result she was easily oriented to CUPE's worker-centred approach. Many times she was able to extend the Local's understanding of the union's role.

Future Challenges

Follow-up training

The project has already identified the need to do follow-up training with workers to ensure they can use the Log Book. They have chosen a 'train-the-trainer' model where Stewards will receive training and will then be responsible for training their members.

Linking to the Division

This was a demonstration project. There was been some sharing of its process and successes with other Locals through the National Literacy Working Group. It would also be helpful to consider strategies for sharing this success with other locals in the Division.