



Workers' Heritage Centre – Online Newsletter

Summer 2009

Staying in touch!

With less a year to go before our grand opening, we are launching an online newsletter to keep our members and friends in the loop about our progress. Available over email and on our website, the newsletter will contain recent news, upcoming events, and interesting highlights from Ottawa's working class history.



Highlighting Housing at the WHC

The Workers' Heritage Centre took its first major step toward its grand opening with the unveiling of its premiere exhibit on May 1. "Outwardly Mobile/Chez-soi enfin!" explores six working-class neighbourhoods in the Ottawa area, and looks at the motivations and challenges working people faced between 1870 and 1910 through the stories of the people who lived there. As well, the exhibit looks at the development of current Ottawa-area neighbourhoods which were suburbs outside the downtown core: Eastview (Vanier), Centretown, Lowertown, Hull, Hintonburg and Lebreton Flats.

"Outwardly Mobile/Chez-soi enfin!" is a traveling exhibit, and is available for display at conferences, community centres and other venues. A second part of the exhibit will be completed by the end of 2009 for the museum's website.

Meet Our Students!

Join us in welcoming our three summer students!

Lindsay Harasymchuk comes to us as a placement student from the Museum Management and Curatorship program at Fleming College. Before joining the Fleming program, Lindsay graduated from Wilfrid Laurier University with a B.A. in Archaeology. Her interests are in Greek and Roman archaeology, and she also took courses in historical and industrial archaeology.

A recent graduate from the Applied Museum Studies program at Algonquin College, Jennifer Potter is one of our summer researchers. She previously worked with the exhibition team for "Outwardly Mobile/Chez-soi enfin!" Jennifer has her B.A. in History from Mount Allison University, where she enjoyed her courses in art history and religious studies.

Our second summer researcher is Virginia Sytsma. She is going into her fourth year at the University of Ottawa where she is pursuing her honours specialization in 20th Century Western History. After graduation, she is planning to pursue her Masters in Library Science.

The Workers' Heritage Centre thanks the Young Canada Works program for the funding to hire Jennifer and Virginia.

Want to Know More?

For more information about the WHC, please visit our website: <http://www.whc-cpo.ca>

Upcoming Events at the Workers' Heritage Centre...

Labour Day : Monday, September 7, 2009, from 12 Noon till 4PM.

The day starts at City Hall with a march to McNabb Park (at Gladstone Ave and Bronson Ave), followed by a picnic in the park including a BBQ, and children's activities, and a display by the Workers' Heritage Centre Museum.

This event is supported by the Ottawa & District Labour Council and admission is free.

Summer Milestones in Ottawa Labour History

As you enjoy the warm weather, here are a few big moments in Ottawa's working timeline to consider.

JULY 1, 1919

2009 marks the 90th anniversary of the Winnipeg General strike when thousands of workers walked off the job from May 13 until June 26. The Winnipeg strike was one of 429 strikes in Canada in 1919 that involved 149,300 Canadians. There were 32 sympathy strikes stretching from Victoria, B.C. to Sioux Lookout, Ontario. Toronto and Amherst also held General Strikes.

Ottawa workers were also active that year. The first signs of unrest occurred early in the year when the Building Trades Council went on strike. Some 3,000 men laid down their tools. The strike was over in three days winning "substantial increases" and even managed to have the federal government agree to the closed shop and weekly pay.

From May 12 until August 2, 250 machinists would be out for 82 days supported by fifty boilermakers who walked out with them.

Then on July 1, Local 279 of the International Union of Amalgamated Street and Electric Railway Men voted 441 to 22 to walk out. They would gain public support with mass meetings numbering in the thousands. The Labour Council was taking steps to hold a vote of its affiliates when the local went back to work ending the chance of an Ottawa General Strike in 1919.

JUNE 22, 1987

Members of the Letter Carriers Union of Canada started a strike against Canada Post.

JULY 22, 1983

Newly organized members of Ottawa's HERE Local 261 began a four month strike against the Mill Restaurant.

AUGUST 4, 1908

Members of the Machinists' Union at the CPR shop began a nation-wide strike lasting two months

SEPT 3, 1894

Parliament established the first Labour Day holiday – kick back and put your feet up, you deserve it!

Oral History Workshop

The Workers' Heritage Centre hosted an oral history workshop on June 27 at the Richelieu Vanier Community Centre. Attended by beginners from unions, museums and community groups, the workshop included topics such as interview techniques, theory and practice, and basic technical and audio skills.

Oral histories are a way for historians to preserve stories that would otherwise be lost. If you are interested in learning more about oral histories, contact director@whc-cpo.ca to find out about future opportunities.

Mayworks: Celebrating Struggle

The 2009 Mayworks Festival celebrated the 90th anniversary of the 1919 strikes. Launched with the National Day of Mourning ceremony on April 28, the festival included music, poetry, history, political economy, and live theatre.

Don Bouzek and Maria Dunn presented "GWG: Piece by Piece," a video ballad telling the experiences of immigrant women who worked in Edmonton's now-closed GWG clothing factory. The CUBE Gallery hosted GWG as well as "Words Work Poetry Night" and the third annual concert "Back Door Concert."

At the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the premiere of Lib Spry's "*No Power Greater*" observed the 90th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike.

Canadian Autoworkers' Jim Stanford was the guest at the Annual Ottawa Canadian Dimension Dinner, speaking about the roots of the current economic meltdown. The festival wrapped up with the WHC and the Canadian Committee on Labour History's one-day conference on Ottawa's labour history.

Want to Know More?

Museum Hours

By appointment only (until May 2010).
Call 613 742-1872 or email director@whc-cpo.ca

Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in labour history?
We need volunteers with all types of talents. For information, email curator@whc-cpo.ca