

2019
Festival

MAY WORKS



100
YEARS



1919-
2019

Celebrating Labour & the Arts • mayworks.org

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MGEU

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Hugo Torres-Cereceda;
Rubin Kantorovich;
Catherine Stearns

MAYWORKS PROGRAMME FUNDING PROVIDED BY:

Manitoba Government and
General Employees' Union
Canadian Union of Public
Employees – CUPE Manitoba,
Local 204 and Local 500
United Food and Commercial
Workers Local 832

DESIGN

Doowah Design Inc.

FRONT COVER ART

Ricardo Levins Morales
www.rlarts.com

PRINTING

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MAYWORKS PUBLICITY

Jessee Havey Good

MAYWORKS FUND RAISING

Karen Byzuk

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

14	City on Strike – Book Launch	2 P.M.
25	Rededication of the Ukrainian Labour Temple	5 P.M.
26	National Day of Mourning	11 A.M.
	Sorry Not Sorry: Unapologetically Working for Social Justice	6 P.M.

MAY

1	Celebrate International Working Class Day	5:30 P.M.
2	20x20 on 1919: 10 Tributes to the Strike that Changed History	6:30 P.M.
4	Mandolin Orchestra in Concert	7:30 P.M.
5	Papergirl – Book Launch	3 P.M.
8-19	1919 Winnipeg General Strike Centenary Conference Building A Better World: 1919-2019	
9-17	Bolshie Bash	7:30 P.M. & 2 P.M.
11	Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba Presents: Boots Riley	5:30 P.M.
	1919 Social	8 P.M.
12	1919: A Graphic History of the Winnipeg General Strike – Winnipeg Book Launch	2 P.M.
13	If 30,000 Strikers Marched Today!	7 P.M.
14	Winnipeg General Strike Illustrated Presentation	6:30 P.M.
15	Winnipeg Labour Choir Concert	6 P.M.
	Winnipeg General Strike Centennial Gala Dinner	5:30 P.M.
16	Memorial Service for Mike Sokolowski	7 P.M.
	Solidarity Forever Parade	11 A.M.
25	Solidarity Forever Community Concert	2:30 P.M.
	Doors Open at the Ukrainian Labour Temple	11 A.M.
26	1919 SYMPATHETIC STRIKE Tour	2 P.M.

JUNE

8	Rise Up 100: Songs for the Next Century Concert	2 P.M.
13	Women Strike!	7 P.M.
17	STRIKE! THE MUSICAL (Student Preview Matinee)	11 A.M.
18- JULY 5	STRIKE! THE MUSICAL	2 P.M. Matinee 7:30 P.M.
21	'Bloody Saturday' Sculpture Unveiling	TBA



WELCOME TO MAYWORKS 2019

The Winnipeg General Strike was about working people uniting against the conditions imposed on them by a social and economic elite, backed by the authority of government and the rule of law.

It is a history that is fresh and relevant to the present day because the same struggle and social divisions are still with us: unions cannot determine how they will bargain with the employers, new immigrants face the same prejudices and hostilities, the gap between rich and poor has grown and social inequality remains.

There are some new twists to the old struggle. Social protections such as pensions and social programs long considered milestone achievements of a “caring” society are now described as “entitlements” and “legacies” to make it easier to cut and slash them in the name of fiscal responsibility. The environment, sustainability and food security are at the mercy of the bottom line.

The Winnipeg General Strike is a part of our history that should be remembered because of what those brave workers did to fight injustice. It should be remembered because history has lessons for the present. The wealth of events marking the 100th anniversary of the General Strike is testimony to its legacy and importance.

We owe a lot to the many who have kept this history alive, added new stories and understandings to our collective consciousness about the strike.

MayWorks Festival of Labour and the Arts was first organized in 1994 on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Strike. This is our 25th year of programming a Festival devoted to working class culture and themes. We are proud that it has both lasted and grown.

Welcome to MayWorks 2019!

ABOUT MAYWORKS FESTIVAL OF LABOUR AND THE ARTS

Art is an important tool in shaping ideas, organizing and communicating to world. The life and songs of Woody Guthrie are famous in this regard. Bertolt Brecht the German dramatist summed it up this way: “Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it”.

The Winnipeg MayWorks Festival began in 1994 at the time of the 75th Anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike. It was an initiative of union and other activists with the aim of exploring the lives of working people, their struggles both past and present and their future aspirations.

Other MayWorks festivals occur in Canada and labour arts festivals exist in many countries.

All serve the important role of preserving and developing working class culture. We are proud to say that our MayWorks Festival is part of this effort.

BEING PART OF MAYWORKS

Would you like to participate in MayWorks. Artists, workers as artists or unions can organize an event in MayWorks. Submissions guidelines and forms can be downloaded from our web site: www.mayworks.org at any time. The process of putting the Festival begins in late January each year.

We also ask you to consider supporting the Festival by following us on Facebook, volunteering for MayWorks events and contributing financially to help us build the Festival.

PHOTO: Courtesy of A.U.U.C.



2019 MAYWORKS

SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, APRIL 14

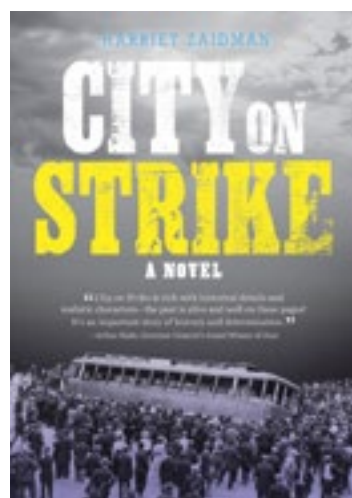
CITY ON STRIKE – A NOVEL – BOOK LAUNCH

Harriet Zaidman

McNally Robinson Booksellers
1120 Grant Avenue

2 p.m.

Free event



City on Strike is set during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 when workers and soldiers returning from World War I demanded jobs, decent wages and the right to organize. Many politicians and business leaders condemned strike organizers, and, backed up by police,

unleashed deadly violence on a day that has come to be known as Bloody Saturday.

City on Strike focuses on a 13 year old boy and his younger sister who are part of a poor, but hard-working immigrant family. Together with their neighbours, the siblings are drawn into the chaos that changed the city and the country, forever.

THURSDAY, APRIL 25

REDEDICATION OF THE UKRAINIAN LABOUR TEMPLE

591 Pritchard Avenue

5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Free event



On February 14, 1919, just months before the tumultuous events of the Winnipeg General Strike, the Ukrainian Labour Temple opened its doors to the community for the first time. Built by newly arrived Ukrainian immigrants, it was the center of their political, social, educational and cultural life. To this day it remains the hub of a vibrant Canadian-Ukrainian community which includes many descendants of those who built the Labour Temple.

We invite you to join us April 25th to celebrate the centenary of the Labour Temple with a rededication ceremony.

Seating limited, to attend R.S.V.P. to 204-467-5043 or to auucwinnipeg@gmail.com

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FRIDAY, APRIL 26 NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Observed on Friday, April 26
Mourn the Dead, Fight for the Living

**Union Centre, Second Floor Auditorium
275 Broadway Avenue**

11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

10:30 a.m. • Light Refreshments

Free event

Please join the Manitoba Federation of Labour in marking the National Day of Mourning with a special Candle Light Memorial Service to remember and honour workers killed or injured on the job. To be followed by the Safe Workers of Tomorrow Leaders Walk, starting at the Union Centre at 11:45 a.m.



Come out and get energized to be part of that change!

For more information: SPCW at 204-943-2561

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1 CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS DAY

**City Hall
510 Main Street**

5:30 p.m. • Assemble

5:40 p.m. • Greetings to the March

6 p.m. • March begins



Join in the annual May Day March organized by Winnipeg Labour Council. The march route will be south on Main to Broadway, Broadway to Smith, Smith to Portage, Portage to Notre Dame, Notre Dame to Albert ending at Old Market Square. Recognition will be given to the two strikers who fell during the Winnipeg General Strike at Bannatyne and Main on Bloody Saturday, June 1919.

FRIDAY, APRIL 26 SORRY NOT SORRY: UNAPOLOGETICALLY WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Location to be announced

6 p.m. • Doors Open

7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. • Event

**Tickets: \$35 or \$60 with partial
tax receipt for the added donation.**

*A limited supply of low-income tickets at \$15 are available.

For tickets: www.eventbrite.ca/e/sorry-not-sorry-unapologetically-working-for-social-justice-tickets-55786730613 or SPCW at 204-943-2561 ext: 1229 or info@spcw.mb.ca

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is pleased to celebrate 100 years by partnering with the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute in a discussion about working together to create a truly just society. Please join an amazing panel of activists, Linda Sarsour, Nora Loreto, and Tasha Spillett, to hear about their successes and perspectives on making the changes that challenge the status quo and addresses bias. A moderated question and answer session to follow the presentation.



THURSDAY, MAY 2 20X20 ON 1919: 10 TRIBUTES TO THE STRIKE THAT CHANGED HISTORY

**Millennium Centre
389 Main Street**

6:30 p.m. • Doors Open

7 p.m. • Show



**Admissions is pay-what-you-can;
suggested donation is \$10.**

The 1919 General Strike united citizens, shut down a city and revolutionized workers' rights across a nation. Hear artists, writers and filmmakers present tributes to the event that changed Canadian history forever—Pecha Kucha style!

Pecha Kucha is a presentation format where 20 images are shown, each for 20 seconds, while presenters talk along to the images.

Presented by The Winnipeg Foundation, Manitoba Federation of Labour and Pecha Kucha Night Winnipeg.

SATURDAY, MAY 4
MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA
IN CONCERT

Ukrainian Labour Temple
591 Pritchard Avenue

7:30 p.m. • Doors Open
8 p.m. • Concert

Tickets: \$20 available at the door

The WINNIPEG MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA in concert, playing traditional and contemporary music. Guest artist The Bart House Band.

For info: barthouse.ca.



SUNDAY, MAY 5
PAPERGIRL – BOOK
LAUNCH

Melinda McCracken
with Penelope Jackson

McNally Robinson Booksellers
1120 Grant Avenue

3 p.m.

Free event



When workers across 1919 Winnipeg go on strike together, 10-year-old Cassie is desperate to be part of the action, so she volunteers to sell the strike bulletin. From her corner at Portage and Main, she watches the strike take shape—watches the strikers get hungrier and the clashes

get uglier. Soon a peaceful demonstration turns into a violent assault, and the idealistic papergirl is suddenly in very real danger. Will she survive Bloody Saturday?

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8 TO
SATURDAY, MAY 11
1919 WINNIPEG
GENERAL STRIKE
CENTENARY CONFERENCE |
BUILDING A BETTER WORLD:
1919-2019



University of Winnipeg (and other off-site evening locations, including the Ukrainian Labour Temple and West End Cultural Centre)

Marking the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike, the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike Centenary Conference (WGSCC) seeks to commemorate and explore 1919's events in both historical and contemporary contexts—this, by way of a 4-day gathering in Winnipeg comprised of over 200 activists, organizers, scholars, trade unionists and social justice and labour rights advocates from across Canada and beyond. Alongside several prominent roundtable panelists and presenters from Vancouver to Halifax, the 1919 WGSCC proudly features as its keynote, activist, organizer, educator and author Dr. Jane McAlevey!

The 1919 WGSCC will also feature performances from local and internationally-renowned artists (TBA) at historically significant venues—including the Ukrainian Labour Temple.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION:
www.brandonu.ca/1919/

FOR FURTHER INFO,
please visit: 1919-2019.com OR facebook.
com/1919WinnipegGeneralStrikeConference

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THURSDAY, MAY 9 TO FRIDAY, MAY 17 BOLSHIE BASH

Rachel Brown Theatre
211 Bannatyne Avenue

7:30 p.m. • All Performances Except
May 12

2 p.m. • May 12 (Mothers Day)

Tickets: \$15

(except for: pay-what-you-can on May 14)

Tickets at the door or reservations by email:
bharrar@yahoo.com or by phone 204-963-6990

The Collective Agreement, an independent theatre group, is restaging, with updates, Bill Harrar's 1985 *Bolshie Bash*. This comedy was reviewed by the Winnipeg Free press as "a distinguished and exciting piece of theatre" and "the least clichéd and most effective play yet written about the 1919 strike."

In *Bolshie Bash* a now deservedly forgotten factory owner (the wholly fictitious Cecil McDowner) single-handedly exacerbates then foils the Great Sympathetic Strike of 1919.

The 80-minute play was written to both inform and delight audiences while affirming the enduring influence of 1919 on labour solidarity.

In the comfortable Rachel Browne Theatre the role of Cecil McDowner is performed by a single actor interacting with a backdrop of contemporaneous photographs—more than 100 flash by—obtained mostly from the Manitoba Provincial Archives.

For further information contact 204-963-6990



SATURDAY, MAY 11 CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES – MANITOBA PRESENTS: BOOTS RILEY



Knox United Church
400 Edmonton Street

5:30 p.m. • Doors Open

6:30 p.m. • Event with Q & A to follow

Tickets: General: \$30, Student: \$20

**Ticket and Post Event Supporter Meet-n-Greet:
\$100 (includes \$50 charitable receipt)**

Available at McNally Robinson, Eventbrite, CCPA-MB, Answers (U of M) and U of W Info booth.

Boots Riley is a prominent black American rapper, producer, screenwriter, community organizer and director whose pro-labour feature film debut, *Sorry to Bother You*, received universal acclaim from audiences & critics alike—topping the National Board of Review's best films of 2018. Lead for the political Hip Hop group *The Coup*, Boots' radical roots were forged from a young age by way of the International Committee Against Racism and the Progressive Labor Party (PLP).

All event Info: www.policyalternatives.ca/offices/manitoba/events



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SATURDAY, MAY 11 1919 SOCIAL

Presented by Myers LLP

Ukrainian Labour Temple
591 Pritchard Avenue

8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Tickets: \$10, need to be reserved, call 204-947-1400

We regret that venue is not accessible—stairs are required to access venue and use facilities.



SUNDAY, MAY 12

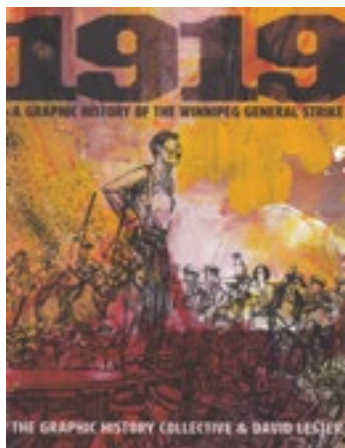
The Graphic History Collective

1919: A GRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE - WINNIPEG BOOK LAUNCH

McNally Robinson Booksellers (in the Atrium)
1120 Grant Avenue

2 p.m.

Free event



In May and June 1919, more than 30,000 workers walked off the job in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The strikers made national and international headlines, and they inspired workers to mount sympathy strikes in many other Canadian cities. Although the

strike lasted for six weeks, it ultimately ended in defeat. The strike was violently crushed by police, in collusion with state officials and Winnipeg's business elites.

One hundred years later, the Winnipeg General Strike remains one of the most significant events in Canadian history. This comic book revisits the strike to introduce new generations to its many lessons, including the power of class struggle and solidarity and the brutal tactics that governments and bosses use to crush workers' movements.

MONDAY, MAY 13 IF 30,000 STRIKERS MARCHED TODAY!

Book Launch

McNally Robinson Booksellers
1120 Grant Avenue

7 p.m.

Free event



A poetry reading by working class poet Ron Romanowski. The launch of his 8th book of poetry dedicated to the strikers of 1919 and activists working today, *If 30,000 Strikers Marched Today!*

This is fierce poetry written by a working class poet who also wrote a book of protest for the 90th anniversary of the Strike in 2009, which became a local best seller. Ten years on and things don't look so good in the world, but we must protest and poetry is a very powerful way of doing so. Writing is itself an act of resistance. Ron's recitation and presentation will inspire many to continue to work in hope that we can together change the deadly path our society is taking.

For more information call Ron at 204-667-6802 or visit the McNally Robinson Website

TUESDAY, MAY 14 WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE ILLUSTRATED PRESENTATION

Henderson Public Library

6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Free event

Join Michael Dupuis historian and author of *The Winnipeg General Strike Ordinary Men And Women Under Extraordinary Circumstances* as he explores the causes, events and results of the Winnipeg general strike in an illustrated presentation. Registration for this free event is available on the Winnipeg Public Library's website.



WEDNESDAY, MAY 15
WINNIPEG LABOUR CHOIR
CONCERT

Ukrainian Labour Temple
591 Pritchard Avenue

6 p.m. • Doors Open
7:30 p.m. • Concert

Tickets: \$10

Loa Henry has resurrected the Winnipeg Labour Choir in honour of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike and a tribute to the working men and women who participated in the strike. The Labour Choir will be performing songs related to the Strike. Guest performers are musicians: Greg MacPherson, Harry Havey and Karen Dana, Joseph and Mike Warbansky.

The concert takes place 100 years to the day when women telephone operators walked off the job at the call of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council to strike for collective bargaining, better wages and working conditions. The venue for the concert is the Ukrainian Labour Temple, chosen as the place strikers often went to organize and strategize.

After the concert there will be a cash bar.



WEDNESDAY, MAY 15
WINNIPEG GENERAL
STRIKE CENTENNIAL
GALA DINNER

Presented by Manitoba
Building Trades

RBC Convention Centre, Third Floor, Hall A

5:30 p.m. • Cocktails
6:30 p.m. • Program and Dinner

For tickets call 204-947-1400

Entertainment: Rainbow Stage preview performance of *Strike! The Musical*, comedy performance by Steve Patterson (Host of CBC's The Debaters), music and dancing with The Danny Kramer Band—brought to you by UNIFOR.



THURSDAY, MAY 16
On the 100th anniversary of the
1919 Winnipeg General Strike
MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR
MIKE SOKOLOWSKI

Brookside Cemetery
3001 Notre Dame Avenue
(immediately west of Red River
College)

7 p.m.

Free event

Please join MayWorks at Brookside Cemetery for a grave side memorial service for Mike Sokolowski, who died as a result of a gunshot wound on June 21, 1919 during a peaceful demonstration.

After the service we will visit the gravesite of Steve Schezerbanovich who died a few days later of gangrene poisoning as a result of gunshot wounds also received on June 21.



SATURDAY, MAY 25
SOLIDARITY
FOREVER PARADE
Presented by UFCW 832

11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Free event

Parade will start at 11 a.m. in the Exchange District and make its way to Memorial Park to be followed by a Community Concert

For more information or to register a Float or Walking Group in the parade, call 204-947-1400



SATURDAY, MAY 25
SOLIDARITY FOREVER
COMMUNITY CONCERT

Presented by CUPE Manitoba /
Programming by MayWorks

Memorial Park

1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Free event

Performances by: Bruce Steele (Host); Sierra Noble;
James Keelaghan; David Rovics; Heather Bishop;
Maria Dunn with Shannon Johnson; Red Moon
Road; Nathan Rogers; Joe Jencks.

Includes:

- Family Fun Zone, brought to you by
The Manitoba Teachers' Society
- Food Court, brought to you by MAHCP

For more information call 204-947-1400



some dusty corners, and reviling some long lost secrets of this historic building with a somewhat controversial past history!

The Ukrainian Labour Temple holds heritage designations from all three levels of government. The building continues to be a vibrant centre for progressive culture and politics and remains a focal point for the Ukrainian community.

SUNDAY, MAY 26
1919 SYMPATHETIC
STRIKE TOUR

2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

\$15 for employed adults—no charge for students, seniors, or those unemployed.

Reserve a seat: commgroup@mts.net or
call/text 204-793-3289.

In May 1919, over 30,000 workers shut down Winnipeg in one of the most important moments in our political history. For six weeks, inflammatory social conditions and relations ignited into a major protest over wages, rights, inequality and revolution

The Tour will go through highlights of what happened in 1919, exposing the social and economic conditions that led to and followed the Strike. The tour reflects on how the echoes of the Strike can be heard in Winnipeg of today—both inspiring some people and threatening others.

The Strike Tour starts in the north end of Winnipeg, goes to the residential area south of the Assiniboine River and then ends in the Exchange area of the city, particularly on the Red River at Victoria Park.

The tour has been fully booked for the last four years so register early. Confirmation and location to meet will be sent to you after you register and provide an e-mail.



SATURDAY, MAY 25 AND
SUNDAY, MAY 26
DOORS OPEN AT THE
UKRAINIAN LABOUR TEMPLE

It's Our 100th Anniversary!

Ukrainian Labour Temple
591 Pritchard Avenue

11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tours from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Free event

The Ukrainian Labour Temple is again proud to be part of *Doors Open Winnipeg's* annual look inside historic and unique structures.

The Ukrainian Labour Temple was constructed in 1918-1919 and had its official opening in February 1919. It is the only surviving Labour Hall associated with the events of the Winnipeg General Strike.

Come join us for some Ukrainian hospitality and entertainment. We will also be conducting some exciting guided tours of our 100 year old building—opening some long closed rooms, poking into



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SATURDAY, JUNE 8

RISE UP 100: SONGS FOR THE NEXT CENTURY CONCERT

Presented by MGEU / Programming by The Winnipeg Folk Festival

**The Cube
Old Market Square**

2 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Free event

Performances by: Tom Morello, Ani DiFranco, John K Samson, Leonard Sumner and more.

Includes:

- 1919 Tavern, brought to you by LiUNA and Little Brown Jug
- Food Court, brought to you by Assiniboine Credit Union

For more information call 204-947-1400



11 a.m. • June 17 Student Preview Matinee
(tickets \$15 each)

7:30 p.m. • Evening Performances

2 p.m. • Matinee Performances
(for days see www.rainbowstage.ca)

Tickets from \$25 up to \$65 all in taxes and fees included.

Tickets are available on-line www.rainbowstage.ca or by calling 204-989-0888

If you think you've seen it before...think again.

Based on true events and staged one hundred years to the day of the climactic conclusion of the Winnipeg General Strike, Re-imagined by a visionary creative team, **STRIKE! THE MUSICAL** will not only feature extraordinary performers who act, sing and dance... but performers who play the score with our musicians at the same time!

Manitoba's rich history of acting, singing, dancing and musicianship combine to create a production of **STRIKE! THE MUSICAL** that defines community!

THURSDAY, JUNE 13

WOMEN STRIKE! 1919-2019, THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

Written & directed by Norman Nawrocki

**Ukrainian Labour Temple
591 Pritchard Avenue**

7 p.m. • Doors

**7:30 p.m. • Performance of
traditional Ukrainian folk music**

8:15 p.m. • Play

Tickets: \$15 at the door or Organic Planet

Women Strike! is a one-act play for three women. They play the roles of six courageous East European working women who became involved in the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike.



FRIDAY, JUNE 21

'BLOODY SATURDAY' SCULPTURE UNVEILING

A public art work by
Bernie Miller and Noam Gonick

Corner of Market and Main

Time: TBA

Free event

A memorial to the 100th anniversary of the 1919 General Strike will be launched in Pantages Plaza. This permanent installation replicates the streetcar which was tipped and burnt at the climax of Bloody Saturday, June 21, 1919.

The artwork was commissioned by the Winnipeg Arts Council with additional support from the Government of Canada, the Manitoba Federation of Labour and Manitoba's Unions, Centre Venture, the Winnipeg Foundation, the Amalgamated Transit Union and IATSE Local 856.



MONDAY, JUNE 17

TUESDAY, JUNE 18 TO FRIDAY, JUNE 28

TUESDAY, JULY 2 TO FRIDAY, JULY 5

**RAINBOW STAGE presents
STRIKE! THE MUSICAL**

Music & Lyrics by DANNY SCHUR

Book by RICK CHAFE and DANNY SCHUR

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PHOTO: L.B. Foote. Courtesy of Archives of Manitoba



The Mobilization and Participation of Women was Instrumental to the Winnipeg General Strike

On May 2 metal trades workers struck to force their demand for collective bargaining. They were soon joined by workers in the construction trades who also faced employer refusal to enter into collective bargaining. On May 14, 500 candy and confectionary workers, mostly women, walked off the job because their employers refused to negotiate a new contract.

It was women workers who first responded to the call of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council for workers to join in a sympathetic strike to support the strikes of the workers in the metal and construction unions. The sympathetic strike was to begin at 11 a.m. on May 15 but at 7 a.m. a shift change at the telephone exchange provided the chance for 500 women workers to refuse to start their shift. This action marks the beginning of the Winnipeg General Strike and by the end of the day some 24,000 workers, unionized and non-unionized, were on strike.

Helen Armstrong is perhaps one of the best known of the women who played a leading role in the strike but she is one of many who in the days to

follow would play important and significant roles in organizing and supporting the strike.

Winona Dixon a suffragette, social reformer, and member of the Manitoba Political Equity League played an important role in the Strike as did Jessie Kirk, an executive member of the Dominion Labour Party. Gertrude Puttee (whose husband Arthur Puttee, published the labour weekly, *The Voice*) worked with Helen Armstrong to establish the Women's Labour League in Winnipeg.

The Women's Labour League is an example of the organizing that had been taking place amongst women for many years prior to the strike. This and other organizations of women workers reflected the rise in consciousness amongst women of the need to organize themselves to defend their interests as workers and as women workers.

The Winnipeg General Strike was about the thousands of women workers who joined the struggle—it was a natural continuation of their struggle for rights as working women. They joined for themselves, their struggle as women and in support of the aims and objectives of the Strike.

Women were a major force in the strike because they accounted for nearly one in four workers in Winnipeg at the time of the Strike.

It was a time of designated “women's work” which meant that except for the relatively few who would cross the boundaries into professions and business—the 1921 census listed only 10 women doctors—most women workers held unskilled jobs. While some women held relatively well paying jobs as teachers and nurses, the majority held jobs with little hope of advancement. These were the factory workers, retail store clerks, servants, cleaners, waitresses and office clerks. According to reports by the University Women's Club in 1914 and the Minimum Wage Commission of 1918 many women earned less than the \$10 a week considered the minimum necessary to live on. Yet these women were often solely responsible for themselves or as the head of families.

Thus, women were drawn into the strike because of the overall conditions and those specific to them as women workers, which saw them doubly exploited as a workers and as a women workers.




Winnipeg General Strike
1919

100 YEARS LATER, THE FIGHT



CUPE
Local 500



Canadian Union of Public Employees proud to
be part of the fight

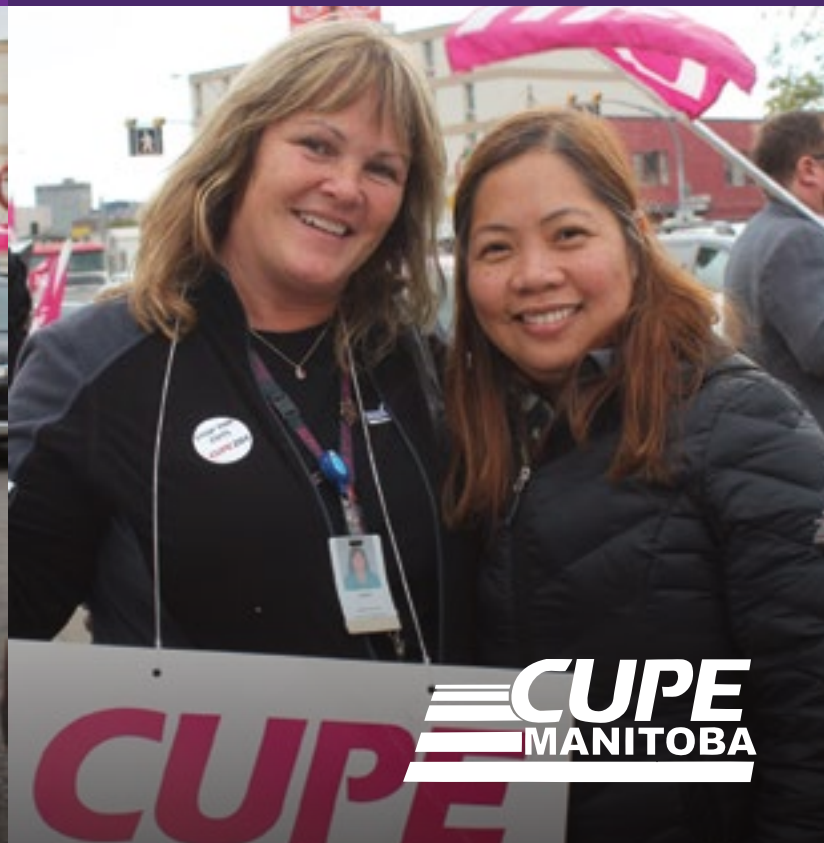


Income inequality persists
2019

FOR FAIRNESS CONTINUES



CUPE204



CUPE
MANITOBA



The Winnipeg General Strike

Centenary Reflections

The 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike shines a light on Canada's largest open-ended general strike, one in which most participants had no direct stake beyond wanting to support the collective bargaining goals of building and metal trades workers.

The Winnipeg Labour Council conducted a vote of its 12,000 members and received an overwhelming mandate to call the general strike. The Council did not ask others to strike, but on May 15th, 1919 and in the days that followed, some 35,000 Winnipeg workers struck, most of whom did not belong to any union.

For six weeks the lines held until Winnipeg's business community and the federal police and military personnel provoked the confrontation that came to be known as Bloody Saturday, on June 21st, 1919. A few short days later the General Strike Committee called off the strike, a significant defeat for labour in Winnipeg.

The fact that such a large scale strike even occurred can only be understood if one considers the charged political climate of the day and the events leading up to May 1919.

The Great War in Europe was a key event. It led to federal government by "order-in-council" in which strikes were banned and wages were held down. At the same time, many businesses profited from war production, and this angered workers.

Labour also opposed conscription and was vocal in this opposition.

The twin effects of a recession in the period 1913 to 1915, followed by the high inflation of the war years and the steady erosion in workers purchasing power led to a growing militancy among the working class throughout North America and beyond.

Union membership in Canada tripled between 1915 and 1919. In Winnipeg in 1917, more days were lost to strikes than in the previous four years combined. Estimates were that one in five workers walked picket lines in Canada and the US during this period.

Workers everywhere, particularly in Western Canada were questioning the restrictive and conservative nature of craft unionism. Industrial unionism, where all workers in an industry were organized, became the goal in order to both maximize labour power and extend the benefits of union membership to all workers.

Western workers were so concerned with the craft conservatism of Eastern labour that they called their own conference in March 1919 to be held in Calgary.

Delegates agreed to work towards the formation of One Big Union (OBU) to achieve their industry-wide organizing goals. They also denounced capitalism and adopted resolutions calling for the five-day work week and the six-hour day. This was a new, militant and increasingly confident labour movement.

This confidence had been fueled by a successful civic workers strike in May 1918 in Winnipeg, one which labour won with a general strike component



PHOTOS: L.B. Foote. Courtesy of Archives of Manitoba

to it as thousands of workers walked off the job to support civic workers.

The Trades and Labour Council passed motions to support general strikes in support of postal workers (July 1918) and Canadian Pacific Freight Handlers in Calgary (October 1918). Settlements negated the need for general strike action in these two situations but it is critical to note that labour considered such actions and voted to support the general strike option. Similar motions were adopted by labour councils throughout Western Canada.

In December 1918 a crowd of 1,700 packed the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg and passed resolutions demanding repeal of federal anti-labour laws, the meeting also saluted Russian workers and their revolution of 1917 and called on Canada and all foreign governments to respect Russian sovereignty.

All of these events, many of which seem unrelated, combined to create a working class in Winnipeg that was informed, frustrated with their low wages and increasingly resolved to assert their demands for bargaining rights and fairness for all workers.

Understanding the conditions giving rise to the general strike and the actual events of the strike itself lead then to the vexing question of just what is the legacy of Winnipeg 1919?

As stated at the outset, it was a huge defeat for the workers of the day and significant setback for workers in general, in Winnipeg and beyond.

History has completely refuted the hysterical assertions by business and governments that labour was attempting to overthrow the “established

order” in Winnipeg that a Canadian Bolshevik uprising was at play in Winnipeg in May/June 1919.

What labour sought were broad bargaining rights and recognition of the legitimate aspirations of all workers. It was in fact the business community who assumed state-like authority in Winnipeg in 1919. These same business interests also took care to ensure that no negotiated settlement occurred in Winnipeg and that labour was put in its place and its leaders were criminalized through trumped up charges of seditious libel.

Of note is the fact that it is not only history which has rejected the business community’s hysteria, but in fact the vast majority of Winnipeg’s population who rejected the business narrative.

Three jailed strike leaders were elected to the Manitoba legislature in 1920. Thousands of citizens marched in the streets and raised thousands of dollars to fund their defense. Thousands more cast ballots for these leaders and others who achieved federal and municipal office through the ballot box.

The solidarity and resolve of Winnipeg workers has not been matched in the century since this epic dispute. Their efforts did not yield the results they sought but it laid the groundwork for subsequent generations to achieve their goals at both bargaining tables and in the political arena.

It is for these reasons that we remember the Winnipeg General Strike and that we salute the solidarity of the workers of that day and the inspiration they provide still.

Paul Moist is a retired labour leader and a Research Associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba



Canada's "YELLOW VEST" movement needs more *gilets jaunes*

By Lynne Fernandez

Since late last year, tens of thousands of French have hit the streets in protest of the country's rising costs of living and shrinking opportunities to meet them, let alone get ahead.

Many of these *gilets jaunes* protesters, named after the yellow safety jackets they wear in public, rely on their vehicles to get to work, or to do their work. President Emmanuel Macron's proposed carbon tax, which would have added painfully to the cost of working in France, was the final straw.

But the *gilets jaunes* are also sick of the French president's neoliberal austerity measures: cuts to public services, higher taxes on ordinary citizens, lower taxes for the rich and for corporations. These injustices, combined with Macron's arrogance, pushed workers to don their vests and hit the streets *en masse*.

The movement was quickly appropriated by right-wing groups in other parts of Europe and even Canada. However, these groups have focused their anger on different issues from the *gilets jaunes*. In Canada people are protesting everything from immigration to the lack of action on building the Trans Mountain pipeline. These grievances are very different in spirit from those of the *gilets jaunes*.

As reported by Richard Greeman in *The Bullet*, the French movement's demands include that no one be left homeless; the end of austerity; no taxation on the poor; a better integration policy for immigrants; a minimum salary of 1,500 Euros/month (about \$2,250); and more progressive income taxes that would force big corporations and the rich to pay their fair share.

Yellow jackets in Canada also want the federal Liberal government to reverse the carbon tax, but their complaint is based on kneejerk anti-tax sentiment and not increases to the cost of living, which will be mitigated and in most cases fully rebated under the plan.

In contrast, the *gilets jaunes* are demanding *fair* taxation and decent wages for ordinary workers. And they have actually had a modest degree of success.

Macron has agreed to rescind some of the new taxes and raise wages for some workers. Even if Greeman is right that these claims are mainly "smoke and mirrors," Macron's public acknowledgment that many French are suffering is an accomplishment in itself. Especially considering that the movement has been misrepresented by mainstream media as fuelled by "typical black block anarchists."

In fact, as Sylvain Cypel wrote in the *New York Review of Books* late last year, most of the 2,000 *gilets jaunes* arrested to that point were older than your typical anarchist or far-right provocateur and had come out to protest for the first time in their lives.

The French have a long history of shaking up the status quo by literally taking control of the streets. The inspiring Quebec student protests of 2012 probably provide the closest contemporary Canadian parallel, but there was a time when our mass protests made international news as well.

In a *Canadian Dimension* article in October, H.C. Pentland refers to the Winnipeg General Strike as "among the great class-confrontations of capitalist history." It inspired similar strikes in other Canadian cities, and the eventual defeat of the strikers spurred the formation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Although the 35,000 strikers were overpowered by Winnipeg's capitalist class, the action left an important legacy for Manitoba's labour movement.

As with the *gilets jaunes*, 1919 strikers were characterized as dangerous and radical. They were referred to as Bolshevik revolutionaries (even by the *New York Times*) who were hell bent on bringing a soviet-style economy to Canada. Pentland writes that there "was much calculated deceit in this image." Nonetheless,





Although scholars debate how revolutionary the strikers were, many agree that most workers wanted to reform the system, not overthrow it.

35,000 strikers—a huge part of Winnipeg’s working population—continued fighting for their rights.

The atmosphere in 1919 was much more volatile than today. The Bolsheviks’ success in overturning the despotic Russian tsar inspired Canadian workers who had returned from the horrors of WWI only to face high unemployment, falling wages and a highly precarious labour market.

There were no employment standards in Canada at that time; no labour legislation; no public health care; no Canada Pension Plan. Although strike scholars debate how revolutionary the strikers were, many agree that most workers wanted to reform the system, not overthrow it.

Though the strike was not an immediate success, many of the worker protections and social services we take for granted today exist because workers took to the streets in Winnipeg and elsewhere to demand fair wages and better working conditions.

Unfortunately, in a case of history repeating itself, many of the 1919 grievances have arisen a century later under the cloak of an intensified, mature capitalism. Western societies are more unequal

today than they were 100 years ago. Productivity continues to increase while wages stagnate. Employment is precarious. How do we respond?

French protesters have peered under the cloak: they see where to focus their anger. Most wear their *gilets jaunes* in the spirit of worker solidarity, decent wages, immigrant rights and fair taxation. Likewise, Winnipeg strikers 100 years ago responded by banding together, locally and in league with workers around the world, against an unfair system.

If Canada’s “yellow vests” can’t see the value in that kind of solidarity, they shouldn’t be appropriating the symbol of the French movement. Hopefully Canadians can distinguish between their message and that of the *gilets jaunes*.

First published in the March April 2019 edition of The Monitor.

Lynne Fernandez holds the Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba where she has worked for 11 years.

PHOTO: Olivier Ortelpa. A *gilets jaunes* demonstration in Paris

A TRIBUTE TO ARTIST

Bob Kell

1944-2015



By James Clancy

Ottawa (16 June 2015) Bob Kell was one of ours. He died on May 31, 2015. He was a soldier in our army—the army of all big-hearted, open-handed, generous and kind fighters for the dignity and value of all working people everywhere.

Bob was an artist. He fought the good fight with his art. He asked no quarter and gave none. He did not use his art to merely mirror reality. He used it as a hammer to shape reality. Bob hammered away at it all his life. In paint, sculpture and fabric he worked to capture and depict the worth of all who labour and the worth of our ideals of solidarity and fraternity. He did it well.

Winnipeg General Strike series

His greatest success came with a long series of works on the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. The series was 10 years in the making. It debuted in a union-sponsored showing in Winnipeg in 1985.

In 1990 the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/NUPGE) commissioned a major mural from Bob for the main foyer in the union's headquarters.

A number of Bob's works from his Winnipeg General Strike collection are also featured in the Canadian Museum of History.

Bob worked fulltime at his art all his life. But his art was always considered “too political” to sell well. He always had to work at other jobs to get by. However, he never gave up his campaign to free “high art” from the grip of the ruling class. He believed that grip meant we were all being deprived of a great part of the “history that belongs to us.”

It's safe to say Bob Kell was the greatest artist working people in Canada have ever had on their side.

Undeniable value

The value of his work is undeniable. There is no better proof of that than the recent decision by the Canadian Museum of History to dismantle the exhibit on the Winnipeg General Strike. This is just one more example of how working class history, “the history that belongs to us”, can be erased or discarded. So long as Bob's paintings exist a part of that history—the history that belongs to us—will exist.

There can be no better epitaph for Bob than the last words of another great union man, Joe Hill, who said: “Don't mourn. Organize.”

Bob didn't have to say it. His paintings always will.

NUPGE

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is one of Canada's largest labour organizations with over 360,000 members. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families and to build a stronger Canada by ensuring our common wealth is used for the common good.

Originally published on NUPGE.ca reprinted by permission




PHOTO: Association of United Ukrainian Canadians / Workers' Benevolent Association Archives

Witness to the Strike

The Ukrainian Labour Temple

Buildings from the days of the Strike do exist but they are becoming fewer as time takes its toll. The building that once was the Vulcan Iron Works, some buildings at CPR's Weston Shops and other epicenters of the strike still stand but are inaccessible to the public and may eventually be torn down. The Trades and Labour Council and the old City Hall were torn down in the name of urban renewal and some would say in an attempt to wipe the history of the strike from our memories.



The Ukrainian Labour Temple is the one surviving structure that remains in the hands of the organization that laid the cornerstone and erected the building in 1918-1919 and to this date serves as a centre of cultural and political activity.

The Labour Temple opened February 14, 1919 just months before the tumult of the General Strike. The Labour Temple was a centre for Ukrainian Canadian workers who lived in the north end and worked at the CPR shops, Vulcan Iron Works, Manitoba Bridge and other factories a stone's throw from their neighbourhoods. Its role as an organizing centre was not accidental. While the Labour Temple fulfilled an important social and cultural function—boasting a stage and theatre seating of significant size, a print shop and classrooms—it was also a centre of progressive political ideas amongst these new Canadians.

The Ukrainian Social Democratic Party was an important political force amongst the Ukrainian Canadian workers and a motivating force in the decision to build the Ukrainian Labour Temple at Pritchard and McGregor. In September 1918 it and other left wing and anti-war organizations were banned by the federal government through order-in-council. With the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party and its newspaper *Robochy Navrod* unable to function, the Ukrainian Labour Temple Association became the leading voice of socialist activism amongst Ukrainian Canadian workers.

In Confrontation at Winnipeg David Jay Bercuson writes of the common cause newcomers of that time would have had with the Strike: "They could easily recall the anti-foreign prejudices whipped up through the war by overly zealous patriots, the orders in council banning their languages and newspapers, the Wartime Elections Act which disenfranchised many thousands of them, the internments, registration and parole, and the use of these systems to suppress legitimate trade union activity."

On June 17, 1919 the Labour Temple was raided by authorities searching for evidence of alleged sedition and conspiracy the charges that were being levelled against the leaders of the Strike. Four days later on June 21 the events of Bloody Saturday occurred during which Mike Sokolowski was killed and Steve Szczerbanowicz received gunshot wounds that caused his death days later. A CBC history of the strike noted a recollection "of the fellow that was killed on Main Street" as being known to those who organized at the Labour Temple.



PHOTO: Courtesy of A.U.U.C.

THE WINNIPEG LABOUR CHOIR

The Winnipeg Labour Choir was formed in 1994 by Mitch Podolak for the first MayWorks celebration commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike. The Labour Choir performed regularly until 2011.

The first 3 years was directed by Ilena Zaramba, followed by Loa Henry who directed for 17 years.

Under Loa's direction the choir included labour songs, social justice songs, anti-war songs, protest songs and progressed to musical theatre with "Mouseland". Loa and the choir were featured in "In Their Own Words: Canada's Choral Conductor" edited by Holly Jonas.

THANK YOU!



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SOLIDARITY

Ralph Chaplin 1915

PHOTO: L.B. Foote. Courtesy of Archives of Manitoba

When the union's inspiration
through the workers' blood
shall run,

There can be no power greater
anywhere beneath the sun;

Yet what force on earth is weaker
than the feeble strength of one,

But the union makes us strong.

Chorus:

**Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
For the union makes us strong.**

Is there aught we hold in common
with the greedy parasite,

Who would lash us into serfdom and
would crush us with his might?

Is there anything left to us but to
organize and fight?

For the union makes us strong.

Chorus

It is we who plowed the prairies;
built the cities where they trade;

Dug the mines and built the
workshops, endless miles of
railroad laid;

Now we stand outcast and starving
midst the wonders we have made;

But the union makes us strong.

Chorus

All the world that's owned by idle
drones is ours and ours alone.

We have laid the wide foundations;
built it skyward stone by stone.

It is ours, not to slave in, but to
master and to own.

While the union makes us strong.

Chorus

They have taken untold millions that
they never toiled to earn,

But without our brain and muscle
not a single wheel can turn.

We can break their haughty power,
gain our freedom when we learn

That the union makes us strong.

Chorus

In our hands is placed a power
greater than their hoarded gold,

Greater than the might of armies,
multiplied a thousand-fold.

We can bring to birth a new world
from the ashes of the old

For the union makes us strong.

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