

Victoria Regional Women's Committee
Minutes
October 26th, 2011

Virginia Vaillancourt, Kay Ahmadi, Brenda Esplen, Sharon Hazelwood, Sonia Manak, Gwen Williams, Jeanette Lum, Rosemary MacKenzie, Cindy Little, Janelle Ho-Shing

Regrets: Astrid Stoker, Leanne Hughes, Maddalena Maher

Meeting called to order at 5:45 pm.

1) Introductions

Roundtable introductions of members in attendance and guest Janelle Ho-Shing

2) Previous Minutes

Reviewed & approved September 12th, 2011 meeting minutes
m/s/c Kay/Jeanette/Carried

3) Report from Summer Women's Institute

Report from Kay Ahmadi at end of minutes.

m/s/c Cindy/Brenda/Carried

Sonia Manak also attended the Summer Women's Institute and found it to be empowering. Sonia met Women from other Unions, Women who were machinists. Sonia found that there was so much to cover in a short period of time. Janelle Ho-Shing was a facilitator at the Summer Women's Institute and advised us that Monica Urritica was able to get a grant and was able to send 5 PSAC BC Women under 30. Three of those Women are now on the Vancouver Regional Women's Committee and one is the secretary for same Committee. The BC Federation is now holding Regional Conferences and the next one is at the end of November. Locals who are affiliated with BC Fed received notification of the Conference. The Conference is titled 'Union Renewal Conference and Olivia Chow will be a keynote speaker. Sharon DeSouza will also be invited to the BC Fed Conference.

There will be a Canadian Leadership Conference coming up, for more information go to www.clc.com

Upcoming Labour College – PSAC will be sending out information on the Labour College.

4) Financial Report

Brenda provided everyone with a copy of the 2011 Financials.

Copy will be attached to minutes.

m/s/c Kay/Jeanette/Carried

5) Victoria RWC 2012 Budget

Meetings	\$400.00
Donations	\$200.00
Events	\$700.00
Conferences	\$300.00
Total	\$1600.00

6) **December 6th Event Update**

Speaker invite letters have been mailed. Poster and invite letters have been distributed to PSAC BC Website, Locals and Committees. Virginia has also posted the event on Facebook. Venue confirmation received for BC Legislature. Still looking for 7 volunteers to read names, set up/tear down, handing out info/buttons at event. Cindy volunteered to help with set up/tear down. Cindy and Sonia volunteered to read a name. We are collecting donations to give to Women's Organizations in Victoria. These items include: New Towels; Pajamas; Socks; Small Kitchen Appliances; Journals; Slippers; Kids Toys; Kids Clothes; Toiletries; etc.

7) **National Child Care Day**

Virginia received response back from the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC to attend our November 14th meeting to share what their group does and how the Victoria RWC can get involved to assist. They have been working hard with PSAC over many years to advance a progressive child care agenda.

Currently they are working on two important projects; 1) A Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning; 2) Child Care is a Right.

Motion to have the Victoria Regional Women's Committee cover the travel and one night hotel accommodation costs (approx \$400.00) to bring a Board Member from the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC to attend our November 14th meeting/event to recognize National Child Care Day.

m/s/c/ Virginia/Cindy/Carried

Rosemary and Virginia will work with the Board Member to arrange their travel and hotel accommodations.

8) Elections

Chair of the Meeting was turned over to Janelle to run the elections.

Chair – Virginia Vaillancourt

Secretary – Kay Ahmadi

Treasurer – Brenda Esplen

Janelle administered the Oath of Office to the newly elected executive.

9) 2012 Meeting Dates

November 14, 2011 – Guest Speaker Coalition of ChildCare Advocates of BC – **Children welcome**

January 10, 2012

March 8, 2012 – **IWD Event**

May 16, 2012

June 21, 2012

September 27, 2012 **Annual General Meeting – Elections**

October 23, 2012

November 20, 2012 – **National Child Care Day**

December 6, 2012 – **Candle Light Vigil Event**

10) **Festive Meet and Greet**

Victoria PSAC will be holding the 3rd annual Festive Meet and Greet on December 1, 2011 at 3:00 – 7:00 pm. The meet and greet is being sponsored by the Victoria PSAC Office; the Vancouver Island Human Rights Committee; Victoria Area Council; Victoria Regional Women's Committee; the two South Vancouver Island Regional Council Coordinators. All PSAC members are invited to attend. An opportunity to network, meet other union activists and relax. Please share this information with your fellow coworkers and members.

Motion to donate \$50.00 from the Victoria RWC towards the costs of the Meet and Greet.

m/s/c Virginia/Jeanette/Carried

11) **Next Meeting: General Meeting October 26, 2011 5:30pm Agenda Items**

12) **Roundtable**

Virginia discussed the "Have Your Say" Survey, which is available on www.psac.com The survey is asking members what they think our union's priorities should be for the next three years. The results of the Survey will be put into a report/plan and provided to a Sub-Committee of NBoD members and will then be presented to the PSAC National Triennial Convention as a 'Members Plan' for debate and discussion.

13) **Adjourned** at 7:05 pm

Kay Amhadi's Report on the 2011 Summer Women's Institute

2011 Summer Institute For Union Women

Putting women in their places, in our union, in politics and in our communities.

The school was held over a five day period (July 13 to July 17) and the average day was 13 -14 hours long. (Classes started at 9 am and last event was finished by 10 pm) The days were so jam packed with classes and events that the time just flew by and we were sorry to say goodbye to our new friends.

At the opening plenary on Wednesday evening 130 women representing different unions and jobs met as one large group. We were informed that this was the largest group they had seen since starting the summer school. Also, majority of the people attended the school for the first time. PSAC was represented by eight women (sisters). One was brand new and knew very little about our union. It was wonderful to have four very active and knowledgeable women (sisters) to talk and discuss things with during this event.

The members were welcomed by Irene Laniger the executive president of the BC Federation of Labour, Tammy Dickinson from Victoria Labour Council and Barb Byers, the secretary -treasure of the Canadian Labour Congress. Jane Staschuk and Nina Hansen of the BC Federation of Labour introduced the instructors.

The message that was conveyed was: Our sisters have worked so hard to get changes and now we have to think about the generation to come. Women make the union strong and we need to get more involved in what is happening around us. There are lots of issues ahead of us i.e. labour rights to do the job, affordable and publicly funded childcare, pay equity, pension, and so forth. We want more women to be able to join the work force. It is our diversity and attitude that drives us and makes us strong. "Together we are stronger."

The second plenary was held on Thursday night. The members watched a documentary called "The F Word" and a discussion was held on feminism. Some members talked about the discrimination that they went through in their jobs and how slow change is, for example perceptions slowly changing about women working in the trades (drywaller, heavy duty truck drivers, painters, engineers, etc)

On Saturday morning there was panel presentations called: Women in Action - Union, Politics and Community. The members heard from:

- **Barb Byers** talked about how we need to be involved in the labour movements because if we do not, the decisions that are important to us will be taken out of our hands and the results may not be good.
- **Michelle Laurie (President of IBEW 258)** spoke about how hard women have struggled to make changes in the unions. We have an uphill battle to make any changes and we must encourage young people to go in the trades and move outside their comfort zone to show we can do the same jobs and get rid of the barriers that are facing us today.
- **Kathy Corrigan (MLA)** advised the members that there are a lot of women that are leadership material and have the skills to succeed. She encouraged them to rise above their cultural differences and enter into the campaign.
- **Jeanette Ashe (department of political science)** indicated there has never been a study of the women in politics. We know that women have a long

history in politics and have fought the gender barrier, health and safety, equality and child care. There were over 100 women in the room and there are 8 seats available in the legislative that we can fill if we had the support of the parties. We must move forward and try to achieve this.

In our course material a “Flash Mob” was described as ‘Expect the unexpected- learn how to use the internet and other organizing tools to make a statement, stage a protest, mobilize around an issue or just get you cause notices.’ So what happened on Friday night was a surprised to me. All the members boarded buses and went down town as a group and walked by the harbour till they got to the Empress Hotel. It was at that point that a large group of the members, at a specific time, started dancing on the crosswalk with signs against the HST. Some people passing by enjoyed it and other people in their cars or on their bicycle, were not impressed.

The core course which lasted two days was called “What is in a campaign”. We learnt:

- How politics governs our union and how it affects us lives.
- What happened from the time a candidate is nominated till the campaign starts
- How important each member of the campaign team is and how we can help.
- Why women need to be involved as we are slowly having a bigger voice in the unions and the government. We were requested to canvas the other members to see if they would joint the NDP party or work on their campaign. The only problem with this class was the instructors were promoting the NDP and trying to recruit new members, which upset a few of the members as they supported another party.

On Thursday and Friday evening I attended the “African Dance” mini work shop. The course was for two hours every evening. This was great fun, very fast pace and not for a person with two left feet. The instructor taught us the dance that she was going to perform on Saturday night and we were going to perform as a group on Sunday morning. The instructor kept changing the moves just as we were getting used to the routine. The only problem with this course was we were not informed we needed to wear workout cloths. Our cloths and shoes were not suitable to work out and we got very hot and felt out of breath. Immediately after this class we had to attend the next event.

On Saturday the course I took was called “Childcare is a right “. I wish this course was given more than half a day as I felt this is a very important subject and there was a lot to discuss.

The group discussed childcare issues the members were facing, i.e. why do we need child care, what is the current availability of facilities in our communities, what barriers are we facing and how can we reduce the problem.

1. The children are our future and we need to be able to work and socialize with other people. Depending on the age of the child the members had to pay more for childcare.
2. We need to look at the location for the facilities in our province or lack of it, hours the service is available, affordability, the limited options we have and the availability of places.
3. One staff looks after 4 children if they are under 3 year old, 8 kids if they are between 3 to 5 years old and 15 kids if they are 6 to 12 years old.
4. The caregivers must be paid a livable wage and be entitled to benefits, better schedules and working hours like all other employees. They must have access to proper training and be unionized.

The government only spends an average 0.23% of the funds available on child care. However, Canada signed an agreement with the UN in 1990 to support the right to childcare. Every four years Canada has to report to the UN what they have done and as they did not meet the requirements of the agreement Canada recently lost its G8 status. Based on the information provided before Mr. Harper came in to power, BC was moving towards a universal child care and integrated early child care and learning. It was indicated that the federal government gives the province funding for child care. Mr. Harper eliminated the plan and gave some parents \$100 for each child under 6 years and made it a taxable.

Canada signed three treaties with the UN:

1. Convention to eliminate discrimination against women,
2. Convention on the right of child care
3. Convention to economic, social and cultural rights.

If we want a change:

- We should support the Coalition of child care advocates report to the UN
- We should lobby our MLA, local and provincial ministers
- We should make the public aware of the problems via media and newspapers, we should also gain support from other unions and other groups.

On Saturday night the members gathered to watch African dancing by Nato Camara. After the performance the participants either went to the movies or participate in a karaoke night. On Sunday morning we gathered and watched different groups perform the Taiko and other drums, African dancing, story telling and a choir lead by our own Regina Brennan. Some of the participants stood up indicated that they will be putting their names forward to run in the upcoming municipal elections. After the final gathering we had to say good bye to our new friends.