



Rekindling the Spirit of 1919

May 8,9,10th 2009

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. The dynamic effort of the workers involved in this important historical moment deserves recognition and respect. We will commemorate what took place in 1919 with a celebration of the Strike and a weekend of analysis, music and discussion of the significance of the Strike for today's community and labour activists.

Planned Events

Friday, May 8, 7pm	Panel Presentations
Saturday, May 9, 9am	Activists Exchange
Sunday, May 10, 7pm	Music Concert

The **objectives** of this weekend celebration are to:

- give community and labour activists an opportunity to learn from each other,
- define political challenges that face activists today, in parallel to what faced workers and their supporters in 1919, and
- propose what can and should be done by activists to create social and political change in Manitoba that could be celebrated and remembered in 90 years!

Sponsors

Canadian Labour Congress	Myers Weinberg LLP
MAYWORKS Festival	Social Planning Council

MAYWORKS 2009

Other 1919 Winnipeg General Strike events planned during MAYWORKS include;

- May 1st Opening, Art and Labour Exhibit, "Bring Home the Bacon"
- May 10th 1919 Bus Tour (of city sites related to the General Strike)
- May 10th Memorial Service for Mike Sokolowski
- May 12th Trial of William Pritchard
- May 23rd Dramatic re-enactment of Bloody Saturday, Directed by Danny Schur

<http://victoriapark1919.ca>

www.mayworks.org

The 1919 Winnipeg General Strike

After World War One, unionized workers who wanted to negotiate better wages and working conditions were often confronted with employers who refused to even meet with union representatives. Winnipeg's unionized workers voted overwhelming to strike in support of the unions that had banded together in the Metal Trades Council to press for collective bargaining with their intransigent bosses.

On May 15, 1919, the General Strike began, with women telephone operators the first to walk off the job to support the metal trades workers. The city came to a halt. An estimated 25,000 workers eventually were on strike.

This demonstration of working class solidarity lasted six weeks, uniting unionized and non-unionized workers. Workers in other cities and towns struck in support. The strike ended with the arrest of leaders and lethal police violence.

Friday, May 8, 7-9pm

Panel Presentations

Knox United Church

This presentation of issues, ideas and insights will feature activists of today, who in some ways parallel the activists of 1919. Presentations will focus on what took place in 1919 and what we can learn from the experience of the strikers. This event will excite and challenge participants, and lead into discussions the following day. Speakers will include;

John Clarke worked at the Westinghouse Plant in London, Ontario and became a shop steward with United Electrical Workers, Local 546. In 1982, he was laid off and became involved in organizing unemployed workers, and he was elected President of the newly formed London Union of Unemployed Workers. In 1989 this organization was one of many that worked on a March on the Ontario Legislature and this led to the formation of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty where he has been an organizer since 1990.

Darlene Dziewit, has been President of the Manitoba Federation of Labour since 2004. She became a union member in 1970 and was an active member of the United Food and Commercial Workers. For over 25 years she worked for UFCW as a servicing representative and negotiator. She is the current chairperson of the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, a founding member of the UFCW Women's Network (she was also the International Chairperson of the Women's Network), and has been on the executives of the provincial and federal New Democratic Party.

Jim Naylor is a labour historian teaching at Brandon University. He has written about the 1919 Canadian labour uprising in *The New Democracy: Challenging the Social Order in Industrial Ontario, 1914-1925* and contributed to a reappraisal of the Winnipeg General Strike in C. Heron, ed., *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*. He is currently engaged in a study of socialism in Canada during the 1930s and 1940s in which he explores the collapse of the working-class identity and unity.

Saturday, May 9, 9am - 4pm

Activists Exchange

Knox United Church

This exchange will involve a day of workshop discussion. We will remember what took place in 1919 and why, through discussion on how we can challenge the exploitation of working class people today. We want to remember the Strikers by finding new ways to support those struggling to advance their social and economic rights.

The activists exchange will bring together people with a range of experience in labour and community activism. However, there will be a common interest in social and economic change that benefits working people and those disadvantaged by our economic system.

Help us plan for the event by registering at 1919-2009@mts.net or phoning 947 2220.

Lunch will be served.

Sunday, May 10, 7pm

Music Concert

Winnipeg Art Gallery

Join us for an evening of inspiration and fun, featuring labour songs that were popular in 1919 and now. The evening will be a rousing celebration of the 1919 General Strike and the workers and supporters involved. Entertainers will be Joe Jencks and Anne Feeney. Tickets are \$20

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April 7th 2009