

BC LABOUR HERITAGE CENTRE



20 Really Rad Things We Did in 2022

1. **Magic and Lethal—The Asbestos Memorial.** In September 2022 we dedicated the first North American memorial to the victims of asbestos exposure. Prominently located on the Vancouver waterfront, the memorial will educate and raise awareness of the threat from asbestos exposure. We commissioned artist Doug R Taylor to create 'Wind Wheel Mobile', a kinetic weathervane sculpture with wheels moving in harmony and driven only by the wind. Elements of the sculpture have a visual relationship to the lungs and bronchial airways of the human body. Airborne asbestos fibers bear a close resemblance to rotating spokes on the wheels. As the wind changes direction, so does the position of the mobile. This speaks to the variety of ways to raise public awareness of the dangers of asbestos.



Judy Cavanagh photo, Canadian Farmworkers Union Collection, SFU Library

2. **'Union Zindabad!'**—a partnership with the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley—explored the history of South Asian Canadians as workers and part of B.C.'s labour movement. This groundbreaking work provided a strong foundation for future work on diversity in B.C.'s labour movement. Special recognition was given to South Asian Canadian women who formed the Canadian Farmworkers Union in the 1980s to demand their rights as workers. We contributed 15 full-length video interviews with South Asian union activists in B.C. to the South Asian Canadian Digital Archives.

3. We introduced **94-year-old B.C. labour hero Ray Haynes** to 1,000 of today's union activists at the B.C. Federation of Labour convention. Under Brother Haynes' leadership in the 1970s, B.C. labour became the most militant in Canada.

4. **Six new volunteer-produced episodes of our podcast, "On the Line: Stories of BC Workers"** were published. The highly regarded B.C. Studies journal called On the Line "well produced, entertaining and educational." There were over 3,000 downloads in 17 countries worldwide.

5. **Labour history is all around us**, as we discovered when we interviewed CUPE Local 15 President Warren Williams, whose family was part of the fight for equality and dignity among black Sleeping Car Porters.



Joshua Berson photo



7. Thanks to a special donation from CUPE BC, **we began translating school curriculum into French** so that it reaches more students. This expands on our project that makes it easy for labour history to be taught in B.C. schools.

8. Our dedicated volunteers have produced dozens of lesson plans on topics We **offered a workshop for the BC Social Studies Teachers Association** on how to use labour history teaching materials in the classroom.

9. **When union members know their history, the labour movement is stronger.** Fourteen B.C. unions and union-friendly organizations, and many

individuals, stepped up in 2022 to provide secure funding for our ongoing work.

10. The pain of losing a family member to a workplace accident or exposure lasts forever. Thanks to a member of the public, we learned of **this moving inscription** at the gravesite of a seaman killed in the explosion of the **SS Greenhill Park** in 1946 which killed eight workers. We dedicated a memorial panel to the tragedy on the Vancouver waterfront in 2016.



11. While at the **BC Federation of Labour Convention**, we played Labour Trivia with delegates. Prize packages of T-shirts, umbrellas, books and cards were awarded. Historic emblems worn by members of asbestos worker unions were displayed in our booth. The buttons, pins and ribbons are part of the **David Yorke Labour History Collection** at Simon Fraser University.
12. We have preserved **45 taped interviews with labour activists and leaders in B.C.** as part of our Oral History Project. The interviews—with transcriptions and captions—are available on our website and archived at Simon Fraser University. Over 100 more are targeted for this year.
13. We built a core of **volunteer transcribers** of oral histories, who also developed a style-guide for consistent results.

ON THE LINE: STORIES OF BC WORKERS

With Rod
Mickleburgh



14. We supported the dedicated community historians at the **IWA Archives** in Lake Cowichan who are preserving the records of Canada's largest woodworkers' union by capturing their history and encouraging their work.
15. Our **e-newsletter published a record 14 editions**, sharing labour history stories and news about our work.
16. Unions across Canada accessed our **blog posts, labour history curriculum and videos**, demonstrating their value beyond provincial boundaries.

[www.labourheritagecentre.ca/
podcast/](http://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/podcast/)

17. For the sixth year, we circulated teaching materials to B.C. high schools to encourage **student participation in April 28 Day of Mourning** and to ensure young workers know their rights.
18. We combed the **records of B.C. unions** and media for memories of historic labour events, including Labour Day parades, picnics and sports, sharing them on social media.
19. We met delegates at the **CUPE BC Convention** in Victoria, where we distributed books, postcards and added interviews to our Oral History Collection.
20. The **board held our first retreat** (in Burnaby) to plan ahead and consider our priorities for the next five years.



Josephine Hallock, 1971. Patrick Kerr files, BCLHC Archival Collection

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