



JIM SHEWCHUK
Award

2019



Sponsored by

*United Way of the
Alberta Capital Region*

*Edmonton & District
Labour Council*



United Way
Alberta Capital Region





Jim Shewchuk

1918 - 1996

*J*im was born in 1918 near Opal, Alberta. He spent his early years working on the railway where hard and dangerous conditions led him to devote his life to fighting for worker's rights.

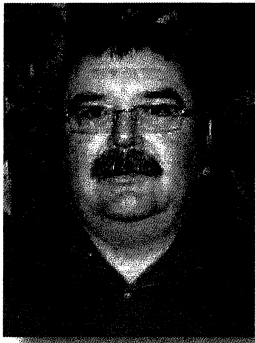
Jim became active in the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport & General Workers Union and eventually was elected President of the Edmonton and District Labour Council, a position he held for over ten years. Jim's EDLC activities included a stint on the Edmonton Exhibition Board, outstanding work on the EDLC Welfare Services Committee, and playing a key role in the building of the first Edmonton Union Centre. In 1961 Jim was a Labour Representative and Board Member of the United Way and, as Labour Council President, was a co-signer of the United Way of Edmonton and Area Charter. In 1967 he became the Alberta Representative of the Canadian Labour Congress, a job he loved and pioneered until his retirement in 1983.

The Edmonton & District Labour Council and United Way honoured Jim's outstanding contributions to his Union, his Community, and the United Way by creating the '**Jim Shewchuk**' Award in 1984. It is awarded annually to recognize an Edmonton & District trade unionist for community, union, and charitable involvement.

Being retired did not slow Jim down! He had moved to Calgary but regularly commuted to Edmonton to teach at EDLC schools. From 1984 to 1996 he attended the EDLC/United Way Labour Appreciation Night in Edmonton to participate in the presentation of the Jim Shewchuk Award. Jim also taught at and helped organize the annual AFL/CLC week-long schools. His commitment to the community led him to serve on the Board of the Calgary United Way from 1988 to 1994. In 1994, Jim was instrumental in the formation of the Alberta Union of Retirees and was the Founding President of the organization.

In recognition of Jim's accomplishments, a memorial bronze plaque has been placed on a bench in Grant Notley Park overlooking the river valley at 116th Street and 100th Avenue in Edmonton. The plaque bears the logos of the Edmonton & District Labour Council and the United Way and is inscribed, "**IN MEMORY OF JIM SHEWCHUK 1918 - 1996, HONOURING HIS DEDICATION TO WORKING PEOPLE AND HIS TIRELESS COMMITMENT TO THE LABOUR MOVEMENT, COMMUNITY AND CITY**".

We are all going to miss Brother Jim Shewchuk. He has been an inspiration to us all.



Dan Uchacz

*D*an has been a member of the IAM for 31 years. Dan has served in a multitude of positions within his local and district lodges from shop steward, Vice President of local lodge 1722, and health and safety committee member, until getting elected as business representative for IAM District 14 in 2010. Dan has been an active volunteer for decades in the Edmonton area, most notably with the Alberta Workers Health Centre. Dan has been involved with the Alberta workers health centre for over

20 years, and was vice chair for many of those years and is currently a member-at-large. Dan had served as a delegate for the EDLC and VP to the AFL for the IAM. Dan has been involved in political action and is very active with his constituency association for the ANDP. An auctioneer by background, you may also have seen Dan as the auctioneer for the AFL convention auction. Nowadays Dan is retired, but keeps himself very busy with the IAM retirees committee, and is always giving his time to help his union and community, whether its fixing up the EDLC BBQ, organizing events for the retirees, or lending his handyman skills to the union hall. Dan prides himself on always being there to help, and his selfless giving of his time and efforts are testament to that. Dan has gone above and beyond for his community and union, and I feel that he is worthy to be bestowed such a prestigious award, as the Jim Shewchuk award.

Matthew Barnable

Dan has been an active Board member of the Alberta Workers Health Centre since 1998, bringing his worker-focused principles to influence the direction of the Centre. He is a past Vice-Chairperson, and has been a tireless champion of the Centre's programming throughout his two decades of service, helping us reach our goals of informing, educating and empowering workers across the province.

Dan also brings some hidden talents to the labour movement. His impressive auctioneering skills have helped raise funds for the Centre, while his elegance and ease on the dance floor have been the envy of many.

Finally, he is a generous, good -humored and honest man who has been, and continues to be, an inspiration to his friends and allies here at the Alberta Workers' Health Centre and to the labour movement as a whole.

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors, I encourage you to consider Dan for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,
Jared Matsunaga-Turnbull



Peggy Morton

Peggy Morton was born and grew up in Toronto. She didn't come from a political family but her father especially, always encouraged his girls to argue out their positions and to stick by them. He'd often play devil's advocate with them. He'd always try to get them to argue out and fight for what they stood for.

When Peggy was in high school she'd see pictures in the newspaper of demonstrations against nuclear weapons and thought, "Gee, I'd like to go to that." It just seemed a necessity to her. The idea that you had a responsibility broader than yourself and your family, and that you had a responsibility to the society itself, was really the other fundamental part of who Peggy is.

Questioning the military-industrial system

Peggy went to university at age 17, which is very young for Ontario where most people are about 19. The first year, she got involved in anti-war protests. The whole issue of nuclear weapons was front and centre during the election between and Diefenbaker. This was one of the first times in the post-war period where the whole question of the US putting pressure on Canada to be part of the US military strategy, and unseating Diefenbaker because he would not go along. That experience also opened up for the youth the question of what role they wanted Canada to play in the world. Peggy and her cohort started questioning the whole conception that Canada is such a great peacemaker, the extent to which Canada is doing the dirty work for the Americans, and its whole role in the Anglo-American imperialist scheme of the world. They decided they should go to Ottawa and protest at the American embassy. So they phoned everybody in the university's phonebook and filled two buses of people and took them off to Ottawa to protest at the American embassy.

Those years were very important in shaping Peggy's political philosophy. She came to believe strongly that people have a fundamental right to their independence, to defend themselves against aggression. The fundamental thing about the right to be is to have your own nation, to have your own self-determination and independence, for people to decide for themselves what government they want to have and how they want to live. These themes have long made Peggy a strong ally of Indigenous peoples in their struggles to assert sovereignty and determine their own future.

Peggy also worked with the "drafter sister." Draft cards would be made and provided to people, because in those days if you applied for your citizenship from outside Canada, then you got extra points. So they purpose was to provide people with a safe way to be able to go back into the States and come back into Canada. Their aim was to stop this war.

The anti-globalization movement

Peggy spent time in Quebec City, working as a healthcare worker. Her union local at the time decided that they were going to send two people as to take a stand against the FTAA, the free trade agreement of the Americas because they knew the FTAA was a further extension of the free trade agreement of NAFTA which, amongst other things, would impact on the question of private and public health care in Canada. They participated in the union march, but also in "the long march of the youth." They marched for seven hours and faced law enforcement with water cannons, pepper spray, and teargas. Authorities did not want this march to go any farther because it was starting to approach the fence that had been placed around four kilometers of Quebec City. So, when Peggy and her colleagues returned to their homes, they

explained to people what was going on—that the government was criminalizing dissent in our country.

The peace movement

In university, Peggy became the president of a student organization that became the *Student Union for Peace Action*. For its founding conferences, she and friends saved their money and took the train to Regina, then spent two days debating what is the definition of a student. It was her first time meeting people from all across the country.

After university, she worked in the office of the *Student Union for Peace Action* for a year. She and three other women from this group wrote a paper called *Sisters, Brothers, Lovers, Listen*. That paper sparked a lot of discussion; they were people who just assumed they were in this movement that was about freedom and liberation and justice and rights, and that we were going to be treated with freedom and justice and rights. Then they found out that is so often not how activists - or workers - are treated.

The women's movement

Peggy tells a story of one day thinking, "Gee I said that an hour ago and nobody listened. Now some guy said it and everybody's talking about it." Then she started noticing that's what happens every time a woman speaks. So, she started talking and out of her efforts came the *Women's Liberation Movement in Toronto*. They were formed that in 1968. It was very exciting, because - for the first - time women were really discussing issues and many of them were absolutely convinced that you can't have freedom under capitalism, and that you can't have socialism without women playing the major role. As part of this standpoint, Peggy was involved in advocating and organizing for women's access to childcare.

One very important activity this group did was to go out on the streets and started talking to ordinary women. Based on these conversations, the group organized an *abortion access and education campaign*. They went to Ottawa and a group of women chained themselves to the seats in Parliament. It's the first time in history that the debate in parliament has actually ever been stopped by anything. During the early 1980s, Peggy travelled with a group of activists and medical professionals in an *Abortion Caravan*. They travelled from Vancouver to Ottawa, providing access to abortions and education.

"Quite a few women said it's the working class who's going to change things, so we're going to organize in the working class. So, the first step is to ourselves become workers. So I never took up any kind of a career, even though I had gone to university and got a degree. I went to work as a worker."

Communist Part of Canada Marxist-Leninist (CPC-ML)

Before Peggy seriously took up any kind of work in the working class, she joined the Communist Party of Canada Marxists Leninists in 1971. CPC-ML was founded in 1970 as a party. It came out of an organization called the Internationalists, which was founded at UBC in 1963. This Party started with the youth and students.

"We know it's one of the biggest problems we face today, that all kinds of things are going to be passed here. People are going to put their hands up. At the end of the day, do they take responsibility to make sure those things are implemented? We needed an organization of a new type, and that was the basis of CPCML."

Peggy continues to be an active member. She also writes weekly articles and research pieces on global issues for the party's newsletter. She sells the paper at demonstrations, picket lines and other mobilizations, providing her with an opportunity to engage people in discussion,

and she also interviews leaders and grassroots activists involved in a wide range of struggles to inform her writing.

Anti-War Work

During Expo '67 Peggy and a group of friends formed a mime troupe. They performed a mime play in which the Vietnamese people defeated the American aggressors. They performed it in cities all along the way to Expo. In Oshawa the auto workers helped them, in Kingston and Cornwall, all kinds of places all along the way.

After 9/11, Peggy became involved with the U of A Coalition Against War and Racism, which eventually became the Edmonton Coalition Against War and Racism. ECAWAR continues to act as a consistent anti-war voice in the city, bringing together different communities whose homelands are impacted by wars of aggression, and organizing rallies and information sharing to counter mis-information about the targets of Western war efforts and protesting the use of war for material gains, such as oil. In particular, the focus of this work is to expose and oppose Canada's role, and to call for an anti-war government in this country.

Working in a trade union

It was a conscious decision for Peggy to go and work in a place with a union. An impetus for her was to look at all the changes that were taking place in the labor law, and how the labor law was being changed at that time, and how all those changes were taking place, to further consolidate the post war arrangements in which the state has more and more control over the unions and how they operate.

Peggy started working at Canada Packers. Three days to go before her probationary period was over she went to a labour school. That Monday morning, she lost her job. Then she went to work at the Misericordia Hospital in 1978. She worked there from then until 2004, when she took early retirement so she could be a full-time political activist. From time to time in her union work as well as her other activism, Peggy was confronted with direct or indirect anti-communist sentiment. However, those kinds of distractions never detracted from the faith that her coworkers had in her as a leader whose fighting spirit could always be relied on when it was necessary to stand up to the employer. She was president of the union at the hospital for 22 of the 25 years she worked there.

Women 4 Rights & Empowerment

Peggy is currently one of the primary conveners of a grassroots group of women who organize an annual Take Back the Night Rally as well as annual International Women's Day activities. W4RE provides a place for "the fighting women" from various unions, communities and organizations to share information and support each other's struggles. They also help women who are experiencing struggles at work or in other legal or social areas of their lives.

Peggy is always wanting to respond to what's going on in the world. She believes in the power of information and regularly conducts research for advocacy. She always contributes to grassroots efforts.

Sovereignty and consent are two concepts that guide Peggy's life. She is rigorous in her thinking and will never accept what she's told as fact and she is always encouraging others to analyze collectively to deepen our understanding together. She is always asking, "what are we going to do about this?", reminding people that we must work together to set our own agenda chart our own future.

Nominators:

Merry Edwards, Glynnis Lieb, Dougal MacDonald

The Award

The Edmonton & District Labour Council and United Way of the Alberta Capital Region to honour Jim's outstanding contributions to his Union, Community and the United Way established the Jim Shewchuk Award in 1984. It is awarded annually to recognize an Edmonton & District union member for community, union and charitable involvement.

The award reflects the universe and the "stars" are the logos of the United Way and various Labour organizations.

A "U" which stands for the "United Way", "Unions" and "Unity" working together for all of us support the universe symbol.

The base is of oak, representative of Jim Shewchuk, for whom the award is named after, to reflect Jim's strong, warm and friendly personality.

The Criteria

- ☆ Made a substantial contribution as a volunteer in the human services field.
- ☆ Was instrumental in the creation and/or provision of services/programs to better community needs.
- ☆ Has served as a volunteer for an extended period of years (not necessarily in one organization).

Jim Shewchuk Award Recipients

- 1984 - Reg Basken, CEP
- 1985 - Ken Balkwill, CUPE Local 30
- 1986 - Ted Smithman, CUPE Local 30
- 1987 - Raymond Lafromboise, CBRT & GW Local 4031
- 1988 - Richard Slabysz, CUPE Local 30
- 1989 - Bert Toppman, CUPE Local 30*
- 1990 - Bob Schimmel, UFCW Local 280P
- 1991 - Joe Dirksing, CUPW*
- 1992 - Anne Ozipko, UGW Local 120
- 1993 - Neil Reimer, CEP*
- 1994 - Clara Jo Naidoo, SSU Local 30004 (PSAC)
- 1995 - Jim Connelly Sr., UFCW Local 401*
- 1996 - Gladys Martin, OPEIU Local 458
- 1997 - Jack Hubler, Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 488
- 1998 - Dave Thiele, CUPE Local 30 (Councillor)
- 1999 - Barrie Regan, United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 1325*
- 2000 - Norma Zopf, PSAC Local 30070
- 2001 - Jack McMorrان, UFCW Local 401
- 2002 - John Ewasiw, UFCW Local 1118
- 2003 - Anita Moore, Non-Academic Staff Association U of A
- 2004 - Bruce Dean, UFCW Local 401*
- 2005 - Jim Woodland, CEP Local 530A
- 2006 - John Malthouse, CUPE
- 2007 - Maureen Werlin, COPE Local 458
- 2008 - Doug Meggison, HSAA
- 2009 - Garry Pucci, UFCW Local 401
- 2010 - Tom Olenuk, CUPW*
- 2011 - Mikol (Micky) Runcer, UFCW Local 401
- 2012 - Lyle Watling, ATA Local 37
- 2013 - Claude Keller, ATU Local 569
- 2014 - Brian Henderson, CUPW
- 2015 - Linda Robinson, COPE Local 458
Dennis Henderson, CUPE Local 30
- 2016 - Yessy Byl, CUPE Local 3911
- 2017 - Yvonne Bootsman, COPE Local 458
- 2018 - Karen Kennedy, CUPW
- 2019 - Dan Uchacz, IAM Local 1722
- Peggy Morton, CUPE Local 2111/CURC



*Deceased