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Advocate

Official news magazine of the BC Federation of Retired Union Members (BC FORUM)

Vol. 28 No. 2, Summer 2025

YEAR ONE: BC SENIORS ADVOCATE

Recognizing knowledge-keeper
Cecilia DeRose, Secwépemc Elder

CODEV: THE POWER OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Time to organize
and rebuild



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THE ADVOCATE

In this edition

We are grateful to share an article by Dionne Phillips for IndigiNews that celebrates the achievements of Secwépemc Elder Cecilia DeRose and the positive impacts she has had on her community; we highlight the great work of CoDev in bringing workers together in solidarity from all over the world; Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate reflects on his first year in the role, and Peter Julian provides a road map for revitalizing and rebuilding the NDP. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Advocate, and have a great end of Summer!

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We respectfully acknowledge that the BC FORUM office is located on unceded lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliłwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

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Time to organize and rebuild for a better future for all Canadians

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

April 28, 2025 shall go down in my playbook amongst the worst days ever category. I gasped, yelled, threw popcorn at the TV (no, it didn't help) and cried, oh how I cried. Just as I thought it couldn't get worse, my friend and one time MP Peter Julian was overcome by the "red wave" which was sweeping over Canada. My only consolation was that he did not have to concede to a Conservative.

Those of us who are politically active knew that the call to "vote strategically" had the possibility of taking away NDP seats. What I didn't expect was that we would lose so many seats as to take away official party status from the NDP. This past election was the worst in the 63 years since the party was formed, and the kicker was that many supporters didn't vote Liberal to stop Poilievre, they voted Conservative.

Initial analysis shows that even union members played a key role in ridings that flipped blue. Terri Givens, political science professor at UBC, has stated, "What you're seeing happening is this shift of people who are union workers who typically in the past might have gone NDP or Liberal, They're frustrated with the last 10 years. They're also looking for somebody who's going to say the things they want to hear, and that's something that Poilievre has really tried to do is to be the person who's out there saying what people want to hear on things like housing and immigration and affordability."

So, what's next? As always, we do what we do best, we organize! We reach out to our neighbours and we talk politics, we talk about what the NDP accomplished in the immediate and distant past and don't let the current government set aside things we made happen. The Dental Care Plan, pharmacare, anti-scab legislation, and



CURC convention June 2025: Sam makes the case at the mic. By kind permission of Arnie De Vaan

pension protection, were all made possible through our dedication to a healthier, financially secure Canada for all. Rebuilding the NDP means each of us makes a commitment to our fellow Canadians that we will do our utmost to move forward, enhancing those gains we made with Jagmeet Singh at our helm. We must tap into the experience and knowledge that former MPs such as Peter Julian and Brian Masse continue to share with us. We must be ready for the next federal election to prove that the "Orange Crush" was not an anomaly, but a true vision of what we want Canada to be. Your BC FORUM Board of Directors is committed to that task. The delegates at the recent AGM proved dedicated to that task by voting in favour of the progressive resolutions put forth; I hope each of you is similarly inclined.

Many of you know that I didn't attend the BC FORUM AGM as I was your representative at the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC) convention that took place June 17th to 19th in Toronto. I co-chaired the general resolutions committee and we got through a significant number of those resolutions that dealt with health, housing,

pension security, Canadian sovereignty, and public services. Not surprisingly, the constitutional resolutions were a bit controversial. Please check out the BC Forum website for more details and insights. www.bcforum.ca/2025/07/curc-convention-2025-report/

I have heard only positive things about the BC FORUM AGM, which was held on June 18th. From the Board of Directors' report and messages from guest speakers, to all the resolutions that were adopted, I am eternally thankful to all who stepped up and took part. Please check out the AGM report, with the list of resolutions, at www.bcforum.ca/2025/07/agm-2025-report/

In closing, I am sad to tell you that I will be stepping aside from the position of president of BC FORUM. It is not a decision I take lightly, however, the health of family members requires that more of my time and attention be focused there. I intend to remain on as the PSAC representative on your Board of Directors and, more importantly, to assist in the transitional period for whomever fills the position of president. I also hope to continue to contribute to The Advocate in some way.

Year one as BC Seniors Advocate

By Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate

It's hard to believe a year has passed since I started my role as B.C.'s second Seniors Advocate following the retirement of the province's, and Canada's first, Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie.

My first – and ongoing – task when I began was to meet as many older British Columbians as I could, in as many corners of the province as possible. I spent last April and May meeting with seniors, community-based service providers, elected officials and volunteers in 24 communities of all sizes in every health authority. I heard first-hand about the gaps and barriers facing seniors, what is working well, as well as suggestions for improvement.

Overwhelmingly I heard the rising cost of living is a serious issue facing older people; this challenge is particularly difficult for seniors on a fixed income. In my subsequent report in June, I issued recommendations for government to improve seniors' rental and income supports, eliminate the home support fee, provide the shingles vaccine for free, and develop a cross-ministry plan to ensure the services needed are available today and in the future for this rapidly growing demographic. There has been some movement by government on these recommendations and I am hopeful for continued progress.

My office also issued a report in July highlighting that many of the 30,000 B.C. seniors in privately-run independent living residences were being charged rent and service cost increases far above government's annual allowable rent increase, and some were also facing eviction. Increasing the rent more than government has allowed was incongruent with the law because purchasing the service packages – meals, housekeeping, etc – is mandatory as part of the tenancy in independent living. Government agreed that the law and cost protec-



Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate. Courtesy of the Office of the Seniors Advocate

tions applied for both the rent and service packages and seniors living in these retirement homes deserve the same rights as other renters in B.C.

In March, our office issued a report on what we heard from over 9,000 British Columbians regarding ageism and how it manifests in their lives, and late this year we will release a systemic review on access to long-term care with an emphasis on the impacts to both caregivers and seniors. Within 10 years, one in four people in B.C. will be a senior compared to one in five

today. Therefore, we must ensure planning starts today so the programs and services will be available in the years to come.

Over the last year I have also had the immense pleasure of getting to know and work with the OSA Council of Advisors (COA). This engaged and connected 15-member council is comprised of seniors representing each health authority in the province. The COA serves as both a sounding board for our office and raises awareness of escalating and emerging concerns facing older people from all regions of B.C.

It's clear that people around the province want seniors to be able to age in place and grow older with dignity and respect. However, we must all act now to ensure the services we too will one day rely on are there for older people today and in the decades to come. Thank you for your continued support and advocacy for seniors in B.C. and I look forward to our work together.

Thanks to Dan Levitt for preparing this update to share with BC FORUM members. We appreciate the work he does to improve the lives of seniors in BC.

For regular Updates from the BC Seniors Advocate visit: www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletters/



News from a decolonized lens

www.indiginews.com

CoDev: Connection through Solidarity

By Janet Routledge

Forty years ago, I was one of the founding members of CoDevelopment Canada. I can safely say that I've always believed in international solidarity. But before my association with what was to become CoDev, my commitment was pretty theoretical. CoDev and its predecessors turned my commitment into action.

It began with the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. Friends of mine were involved in "Tools for Peace", gathering goods and medical supplies to support the people of Nicaragua in the face of the U.S. blockade, meant to crush them and their revolution. Our local group soon became known as "TUG", the Trade Union Group. There were other groups as well; lawyers mobilizing lawyers, Christians mobilizing Christians, and teachers mobilizing teachers. It was very grassroots.

My husband and I were fortunate enough to be part of a labour tour to Nicaragua in the early years of the revolution. Our plane had a scheduled stop in El Salvador on its way to Managua. I remember seeing anti-aircraft guns surrounding the runway. Salvadorian soldiers armed with rifles boarded the plane and went down the aisles. Why? To intimidate us? Scare us?

In Managua, we visited a church in a barrio that had been one of the



Janet Routledge, use by kind permission.

first neighbourhoods to revolt against Somoza. The interior of the church was covered in vivid murals that depicted Jesus as a revolutionary leading his people to freedom and victory.

I remember visiting a farming cooperative near Esteli and looking up to the hills and seeing smoke from bazookas engaged in battle with the enemy. I remember giving blood at a field hospital at the front.

That was forty years ago.

So why is it so important that CoDev continues and expands its work today?

Income and wealth inequality has risen throughout the world since CoDev was founded. An increasingly unequal

society can weaken trust in public institutions and undermine democratic governance. We've also come to distrust each other. If we and our neighbours think we are fighting over the crumbs, if we perceive each other as outsiders that can be left behind, then our neighbours become threats, and our enemies. We've seen this played out in the last few elections.

Perhaps we in Canada have started to take class or social solidarity for granted. We may have forgotten that it is something we need to build, to nurture, to test, and to share.

CoDev is not a charity, it is a beacon of international solidarity. It builds relationships with key players in the global economy who together, and only together, can build a global economic model in which no one gets exploited to enrich someone else. CoDev is uniquely positioned to make visible and create a bond with the people on the other side of the world who grow our food, sew the clothes we buy, assemble our electronics, and who, unless we go on a CoDev tour, we will never meet.

If we could meet them where they live, we would learn that the only reason most of us can live within our means is because they can't.

I'm proud that Canadians are standing united against Trump but we can't do it alone. We need to join with workers in other countries through the organizations that unite us. We need to connect ordinary Canadians with our counterparts in Mexico, Columbia, the Philippines, and, yes, the United States. CoDev can play an important leadership role in making that happen.

Janet Routledge is MLA for Burnaby North, first elected in 2017, and currently serves as the Government Caucus Deputy Whip.

CoDev is a Living Wage employer. Find out more about how you can support international solidarity through CoDev visit www.codev.org.



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Knowledge-keeper Cecilia DeRose recognized for her ‘massive impact’ in Secwépemc communities

By Dionne Phillips, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter, IndigiNews

The Elder from Esk'etemc First Nation is a champion of culture and language both in her own family and far beyond.

Reprinted with kind permission of Dionne Phillips and IndigiNews

At the kitchen table of her home in Williams Lake, Secwépemc Elder Cecilia Dick DeRose sits across from her daughter Lulu, who is beading a hat.

Lulu learned to bead from her mother, who has taught multiple generations in their family about their culture, including berry picking, working with buckskin and speaking Secwepemtsín.

“She just immersed it into our life,” Lulu says.

“It was part of our life, part of our culture, automatically.”

These teachings have extended far beyond DeRose’s own family, and she has taught many people about language, plant medicines, cultural safety and much more. Her ongoing work as a knowledge-keeper was recognized by Thompson Rivers University, which recently awarded DeRose with an honorary degree for her “massive impact on the healing of Secwépemc communities.”

At 89 years old, DeRose is still as engaged in the language and culture as she’s ever been throughout her life — as is evident from the basket of in-the-works projects in her living room including a brown hat with a beaded brim and a baby basket for a doll.

Her knowledge only grows throughout the years as she continues to learn, and she is always searching for new



Cecilia DeRose with handmade presents for each member of her family. Courtesy of IndigiNews.

techniques and recipes. DeRose — who is a great-grandmother — has a particular affinity for Secwepemtsín and seeing the language being used in the community is important to her.

“That was our language, our birth language, and our identity,” she says.

“I love my language and I speak it whenever I can.”

‘Don’t be shy to share’

Born in Esk’etemc First Nation to Matthew and Amelia Dick, she grew up speaking Secwepemtsín fluently with her family and learned to tan buckskin, bead, and ride horses with her family. All her siblings were equal when it came to their roles and responsibilities.

As with many Elders, however, her time at the St. Joseph’s Mission, a residential “school” in the Williams Lake area, inhibited her language. Until the age of 16 when she aged out

of the “school,” her connection to her Secwépemc culture was strained.

DeRose’s experiences at the “school” led to her not wanting to teach her children Secwepemtsín as their first language. Her children recall her wanting them to have an easier time with their peers, however they were still raised with pride of their Indigenous language and ancestry.

“She’s just always taught us to be proud of [the language] and carry it on and share what you know. Don’t be shy to share,” Lulu says.

As her children got older she began teaching the language and her son, David, recently spent over a year immersing himself in Secwepemtsín with her guidance. The cultural and language lessons he has received from his mom throughout his life “guided me in just being the person I am,” he says.

(cont. on page 11)



Membership Information

You must purchase a membership in BC Forum to be eligible for the BC Forum Benefit Plan

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GOLD PLAN

PLATINUM PLAN

CONVERSION PLAN

ENHANCED CONVERSION PLAN

VALUE PLAN

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DRUGS: Pay Direct Card Included

To age 85 • Prescription Drugs 80% to a max. of \$600 per year • Generic Drugs only, unless otherwise specified by physician • No Lifestyle

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MEDICAL TRANSPORT: Air & Land included

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MEDICAL ITEMS: \$750 max. per year

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OUT OF PROVINCE/COUNTRY TRAVEL MEDICAL

\$500,000 per lifetime; 15 day Emergency only

Age limit 85 years old

	Extended Only		With Dental	
	Under 70	70 +	Under 70	70 +
Single	\$85.68	\$115.57	N/A	N/A
Couple	\$131.60	\$191.36	N/A	N/A
Family	\$193.68	\$253.44	N/A	N/A

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VALUE PLUS PLAN

You must be converting from a previous plan

DRUGS: Pay Direct Card Included

To age 85 • Prescription Drugs 80% to a max. of \$1200 per year • Generic Drugs only, unless otherwise specified by physician • Includes Oral Contraceptives • No Lifestyle

VISION CARE

\$125 every 24 months

Eye Exams up to \$50 every 24 months

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

90% max. to \$400 per year, per practitioner, per person | Chiropractor • Physiotherapist • Foot Care Professionals • Speech Therapist • Psychologist • Massage Therapist • Acupuncturist • Osteopath • Naturopath

MEDICAL TRANSPORT: Air & Land included

AUDIO: Hearing Aids plus Repairs or Replacement of Parts • \$400 max. every 4 years

PRIVATE DUTY NURSING: \$3,000 max. per year

MEDICAL ITEMS: \$1,500 max. per year

ACCIDENTAL DENTAL: \$2,500 max. per year

SEMI-PRIVATE HOSPITAL

\$200 per day; max. 25 days per year

OUT OF PROVINCE/COUNTRY TRAVEL MEDICAL

\$500,000 per lifetime; 30 day Emergency only

Age limit 85 years old

DENTAL

Combined max. per person, per year • \$500 first 12 months; \$750 next 12 months; \$1,000 every 12 months thereafter • Basic coverages 80% up to above limits • Basic Comprehensive coverages 80% up to above limits

	Extended Only		With Dental	
	Under 70	70 +	Under 70	70 +
Single	\$145.48	\$175.37	\$202.18	\$232.07
Couple	\$242.94	\$302.70	\$356.68	\$416.44
Family	\$456.86	\$539.76	\$451.38	\$511.13

Questions? Email: info@weconsultants.ca or phone

(The plan overviews in this brochure are intended for descriptive use only)

PLATINUM PLAN

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CONVERSION PLAN

ENHANCED CONVERSION PLAN

**You must be converting from a previous Benefit Plan within 60 days to qualify for this Plan.
Pre-existing Conditions are covered.**

EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS

DRUGS: NO Pay Direct Card: Prescription Drugs 80% up to \$1000 per year. After 100% of eligible expenses, subject to maximums based on Pharmacare's eligible drugs.

(The Extended Health maximum benefit is \$35,000. Life Time Limit)

MEDICAL ITEMS: In Province expenses 80% when prescribed by a Physician. Limitations and restrictions apply.

VISION CARE: Upon completion of 12 continuous months. Eyeglasses up to \$125 every 24 months.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: Total combined benefit \$500 per calendar year per person. Chiropractors, Naturopaths, Physiotherapists, Massage Therapists, Podiatrists: \$500 per calendar year per person.

MEDICAL TRANSPORT: In Province Ambulance Service Emergencies only. Emergency out-of-Province Eligible Expenses: when ordered by attending Physician maximum \$1000.

AUDIO (Hearing Aids): Up to \$500 per 5 year period per person.

PRIVATE DUTY NURSING: Registered Nurse (RN) up to 720 hours per calendar year for an acutely ill bed patient in hospital in BC. Up to \$1000 when acutely ill and bedridden at home. Lifetime maximum is \$5000 per person.

HOSPITAL INDEMNITY BENEFIT: If an insured is hospitalized \$10 per day from the 5th to the 90th day of hospitalization, provided not due to any pre-existing conditions.

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EMERGENCY TRAVEL ASSISTANCE: Locating the nearest appropriate medical care. Handling medical evacuations and related transportation needs. Locating Legal assistance and replacing lost passports.

ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT: The maximum benefit payable in the event of death or dismemberment resulting within 365 days of an accident is \$25,000. This coverage terminates at age 70.

FINAL EXPENSE BENEFIT: Based on actual funeral expenses of up to \$5000 per insured person if death occurs from any cause after 24 months of continuous coverage.

DENTAL(when added to your Extended Health):

Plan (A): During the first 12 months of coverage under this dental plan eligible expenses will be reimbursed at 70% of the PBC fee schedule. Thereafter, the reimbursement percentage will be increased to 80%. Dental coverage will begin 3 months from the date you (and/or your dependents) are covered under the EHC plan. This is basic Dental Coverage with limits and restrictions. Check policy wordings for coverages.

EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS

DRUGS: Pay Direct Card INCLUDED: Prescription Drugs 80% only. 8% drug markup limit and a \$10 Dispensing Fee Cap. Based on Pharmacare's list of eligible drugs.

(The maximum benefit is \$35,000. Life Time Limit)

Same coverages as the Conversion Plan

MEDICAL ITEMS • VISION CARE • PROFESSIONAL SERVICES •

MEDICAL TRANSPORT • AUDIO (Hearing Aids) •

PRIVATE DUTY NURSING • HOSPITAL INDEMNITY BENEFIT •

FOUR DAY TRAVEL MEDICAL PLAN • EMERGENCY TRAVEL

ASSISTANCE • ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT •

FINAL EXPENSE BENEFIT • DENTAL (when added to your

extended Health Care)

Plan (A) The same coverages, wordings and reimbursement as the Conversion Plan

PLUS: Enhanced Dental - Plan (B)

Coverage limit 50% with a \$1000 limit per person annually.

CONVERSION PLAN

	Extended Only		With Dental	
	Monthly	Annual (-5%)	Monthly	Annual (-5%)
Single	\$104.42	\$1,190.39	\$170.56	\$1,944.38
Couple	\$205.87	\$2,346.92	\$338.68	\$3,860.95
Family	\$243.25	\$2,773.05	\$460.70	\$5,251.98

ENHANCED CONVERSION PLAN

Single	Couple	Family
\$244.90	\$487.12	\$671.93



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(cont. from page 6)

David recalls his mom teaching the importance of respect in all aspects of life with a focus on respect and education, which she said was key for her children.

“Always respect your Elders, respect the land, and get a really good education,” he recalls were his mom’s lessons.

DeRose’s first formal teaching opportunity came from the interest of those around her. She was working at the campsite in the nearby community of Xatšúll when community members expressed interest in the language. She began holding classes in the evenings which led to her moving into the school systems to teach high school students.

DeRose has taught people of all ages, and emphasizes the importance of starting the language learning process as young as you can. She notes that with older students, the deep sounds used in Secwepemctsín can be more difficult to pick up.

With the success of the Spi7uy Squqluts Language and Culture Society and the growing Secwépwmc programs throughout Secwepemcúl’ucw, DeRose hopes to bring conferences and language gatherings closer to home. She’d like to see events with fluent speaking programs to keep the language alive.

She says constant exposure to the language would make it easier to learn, including Secwépwmc and other Indigenous languages on signs, menus and greetings throughout the area.

Although there are different dialects throughout the region, DeRose believes that as long as the language is being learned it’s promising.

“We still can understand each other with a different dialect,” she says.

Excellence in promoting culture and healing

While DeRose remains humble regarding the work she’s done in many Secwépemc communities when it comes to transmitting culture and



DeRose working on a baby basket for a doll. Courtesy of IndigiNews.



DeRose teaches her great grandchildren how to make a hand drum. Courtesy of IndigiNews.

language, she has been recognized with some high-profile accolades.

In 2018, DeRose was honoured as an Indspire award recipient in the Culture, Heritage & Spirituality branch in 2018. Marianne Ignace, who was the one to nominate DeRose, has spoken on the contributions she has made to research projects including a resource Ignace co-edited called Secwepemc People and Plants: Research Papers in Shuswap Ethnobotany.

The award ceremony showed how DeRose’s teachings endured the years

as her daughter recalls Darrell Dennis, a former language student of her mom’s, speaking Secwepemctsín at the ceremony when welcoming her to the stage.

When she sees her peers or old students she speaks to them in Secwepemctsín, utilizing her language skills and testing how well people remember her teachings.

“We still speak to them when we see them ... see if they remember,” she says with a laugh.

In June of 2024, DeRose was honoured with a Doctor of Letters, honoris causa from Thompson Rivers University. Her family, friends, and previous students were in attendance to commemorate the momentous occasion.

Kúkwpi7 Fred Robbins from Esk’etemc First Nation was in the audience as well as Williams Lake First Nation Kúkwpi7 Willie Sellars, who spoke at the ceremony. He commended DeRose’s commitment to her culture and her willingness to share her teachings to create a prideful next generation.

“Her deep commitment to promoting understanding, her respect for nature and her dedication to indigenous traditions, values and practices have deeply impacted the healing of Secwépemc communities,” he said at the ceremony.

Today DeRose is still lending her knowledge to others in an effort to educate the generations on the Secwépemc language and culture.

‘Everything gets thanked’

From working as a teacher in the Williams Lake school district, to creating resources with Indigenous organizations such as Three Corners Health Services Society who incorporate traditional practices into their healthcare programs, DeRose helps wherever she can.

Five years ago, DeRose was involved in a series of videos launched by Three Corners, in which she explains the benefits and harvesting of traditional

(cont. on next page)

CELEBRATION

(cont. from previous page)
melámen (medicine) including a juniper cleanse, oregon grape tea, and spruce salve. Along with the videos she helped create a melámen resource explaining the plants – what they can be used for and how to harvest and prepare them.

In the spruce salve video, DeRose can be seen harvesting from the spruce trees, scraping the soft pieces off the tree bark.

“This is nice stuff,” she says as she combines the pitch with vaseline to create the sllégwmen (salve). While heating up the two ingredients, DeRose spoke on the importance of thanking the animals, nature and earth for the medicines they provide.

“Everything feeds off the earth so everything gets thanked,” she says.

“Of course I always say spruce is my favourite medicine for salve, but you can use any pitch.”

She works with the Spi7uy Squqluts Language and Culture Society, where she has helped give places Secwépemc names and mentors others in the language. She also attended a week-long culture immersion camp in July with the society, where they made homemade fruit leather and incorporated the language throughout the process.

DeRose has commented on the evolution of Secwepemctsín and how the language we have today is not an exact replica of the language spoken many years ago. In a video with fellow Secwépemc Elder Jean William, DeRose explains her background with the language.

She notes that there is more interest over the years as students are wanting to learn and are committed to learning Secwepemctsín.

“We’re hoping that they take off with the language,” she says.

DeRose also speaks of the change of the pronunciation over time and that the language now being learned is their own.

She continues to teach, learn and pass down her teachings to the next generations.

“Always be proud to be Indian,” was a phrase that DeRose heard from her father, as a young child and she continues to showcase this through the practice of her culture.

“I let everybody know, in the whole world, who I am and where I came from,” she says.

Reporting for this story was made possible in part through funding from the Real Estate Foundation of BC, a philanthropic organization working to advance sustainable, equitable, and socially just land use across the province.

For more great Indigenous-centred journalism and media visit www.IndigiNews.com.



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Celebrating 40 years of solidarity

By Aliza Nevarie, Editor

On June 07, CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev) held their 40th Anniversary fundraising and solidarity dinner at the Maritime Labour Centre in Vancouver. It was a full house of dedicated union and community members gathered to support and recognize the critical work of CoDev, and the fight for the rights of workers across the world.

There was delicious food by Migrant Journey Society of BC, great company, and best of all, a cake auction! With two dozen cakes to choose from, the auction raised \$5,000.00 in donations! It was some of the most expensive cake I've ever had, but worth every penny.

Not only were folks gathered to celebrate CoDev but also the 2025 International Solidarity Award winners, Larry Kuehn and representatives



From left to right: Julia MacRae of CoDev, Kathy Ramirez & Rosa Maria Lezaquia Vargas of SUTEP, and Alexandra Henao-Castrillon of CoDev. Photo by Zenna Wong, use by kind permission of CoDev.

from the Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú (SUTEP), who were in attendance all the way from Peru. These award recipients share important affinities as union activists and educators, but also as foundational partners in CoDev's work in international solidarity.

Larry's history of activism is as long as CoDev itself, starting with a trip to Central America in 1985 with Rick Craig, one of CoDev's founders, and the BCTF, for whom Larry worked for over 30 years. Although retired, there is no such thing as a retired activist, and Larry continues his commitment to education activism and international solidarity as a board member on Public Education/BC and as treasurer on the CoDev board of directors.

It was with SUTEP that CoDev built their first southern partnership, and it is an enduring one. SUTEP is a militant union that fights for public education and the dignity of working and retired educators. SUTEP is proud to now have both indigenous and retired teachers in union leadership.

(cont. on next page)

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(cont. from previous page)

Accepting the award on behalf of SUTEP were Rosa Maria Lezaquia Vargas and Kathy Ramirez, representatives on the national executive board. Rosa Maria, the Equity and Gender representative, shared the particular struggles of retired educators in Peru, who receive a meagre pension of \$200 a month. Congresspeople take in \$200 a day. The extraordinary pressure resulting from this disparity led to a recent joint protest. Suppressed by the police, many protesting retired teachers suffered with physical injuries. A high price to pay for basic economic justice.

Kathy, is the first indigenous representative on SUTEP's national executive committee. Hailing from Uyacali in the Amazon region, she spoke powerfully about Indigenous identity and the importance of Indigenous representation in the union, and in education. Indigenous knowledge is deep and

strong and tied to the land; as Kathy shared, "the forest is our medicine, the rivers are our grocery stores".

Overall, the night was a success. People came together across generations and geography to celebrate what can be done in solidarity to improve the lives working people.

Thanks to Kane Tse

By Agnes Jackson, BC FORUM Director, HSA

In April, Kane Tse came to the end of four years of service as the president of the Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA). As the BC FORUM board director for HSA, I thank him for his support of us during that time and for helping me in my role as liaison between HSA and BC FORUM.

His promotion of BC FORUM included inviting Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President, and me, to make a presentation to an HSA board meeting.

Find out more about this great event, CoDev, and the International Solidarity Award recipients at

www.codev.org & www.codev.org/news/2025awards

Photo by Zenna Wong



This in person presentation to the HSA elected representatives from across the province set the stage for ongoing two-way communication and promotion.

I recently had the pleasure of sitting beside Sarah Kooner, the new HSABC President, at the 40th Anniversary CoDevelopment Canada fundraising dinner, and, having had ample opportunity to talk with her, I am confident that there will continue to be a firm relationship between our two organizations.

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Through our unions we saw the benefits of collective action. We know our voices are strongest when we stand in solidarity. That's where BC FORUM comes in. We are the only provincial organization that represents union members who have retired or are nearing retirement. We are an integral part of the labour movement, with formal representation in leadership bodies, and we maintain strong links with provincial and national seniors' groups. Here's how you can support and benefit from BC FORUM:

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Look at the mailing label on this edition of the Advocate to check whether your membership is now due for renewal. If your membership is about to expire, you can renew by mailing the coupon below to BC FORUM, 110 - 4295 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 1H1; or renew online at www.bcforum.ca.

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Rebuilding the Party, and the Movement

By Peter Julian, Former Member of Parliament for New Westminster–Burnaby

First, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to BC FORUM members for your support, encouragement, and steadfast commitment to social justice and the labour movement. Many of you reached out following the recent election, and your messages reminded me how vital your voices are—not just to our communities, but to the future of the progressive movement in Canada. Thank you for standing with me and with the values we share.

As the Member of Parliament for New Westminster–Burnaby, I had the honour of serving our community for two decades. On April 28, I was narrowly defeated, which was the closest NDP loss in the country. We only needed 987 more people to stick with us rather than voting Liberal, to keep my riding NDP.

While the result was deeply disappointing, I've been truly moved by the over 500 messages I've received from constituents, union allies, and friends across Canada. Your encouragement and calls for renewal remind me why I entered public life—and why our work must continue.

Since the election, I've returned to my roots—volunteering weekly at the Union Gospel Mission and the Society to End Homelessness, staying involved in community events like the Queensborough Children's Festival and the Voice of Burnaby Seniors, and keeping in touch with local groups and advocates. I will continue to be active in our community—listening, engaging, and serving people however I can. I was honoured to be recognized recently by the BC Professional Fire Fighters Association for my efforts to ban harmful PFAS chemicals, and by MOSAIC BC for our advocacy supporting newcomers.

Serving as the MP for New Westminster–Burnaby meant fighting every day for the values our community holds dear. I'm proud of the progress we've made together. As NDP House Leader



Peter Julien, courtesy of Peter Julien.

and Health Critic, I played a leading role in advancing the Canada Dental Care Plan, ensuring access to dental care for millions of Canadians. I helped negotiate the National Pharmacare Act, which will cover contraceptives and diabetes medications, and fought hard for anti-scab legislation to protect workers on the picket line. We also secured increased funding for affordable housing—progress that was only possible through tireless advocacy and grassroots organizing.

But this moment calls for more than reflection—it calls for rebuilding. Our party must reconnect with its base, grow our membership, and

re-engage deeply with union activists and progressive movements across the country. We need an open and democratic renewal process—one where *NDP members from coast to coast to coast are consulted, included, and empowered* to shape the future of our party. Rebuilding from the ground up is the only way we can return to Parliament stronger and more united.

We've done it before. After the 1993 setback, we listened, rebuilt, and came back. That's what we must do again now. Let's take the time to engage, listen, and shape the future of our party together.

Canada does better when there is a strong NDP. Together, we can build a stronger, more vibrant NDP that leads with courage and delivers real results for Canadians.

Let's stay connected. You can reach me at MrPeterJulian@gmail.com or by phone at 604-724-6306. Follow me online:

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In solidarity, Peter Julian, Former Member of Parliament for New Westminster–Burnaby.

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