



Word on the Coast

The convention opening video is more work than the impromptu production it might look like. Especially for Linda Silas as the video showed all the work she did, in sped-up film mode, straightening all the table cloths in the giant hall; up at the ceiling on a lift hanging the lights; and even setting out chairs. The amazing scene of Linda doing it all herself, made for a light moment at the start of the day.

Beautiful sunshine greeted the nurse visitors to the "wet coast" again this morning. Premier Gordon Campbell was quick to credit Linda Silas with the weather too. She must have commanded the weather gods to deliver.

Jumping in the ocean? Homeless panhandlers are all up and down the streets in downtown Vancouver. One tougher looking character with a tracheotomy, insisted it was so warm he was going for a dip in the ocean. But only up to his neck!



Keynote speaker Dr. Steve Robbins wowed delegates, and brought them to tears, with an inspirational and emotional presentation on the power of diversity. His personal story of hardship and family loss moved everyone, but then he revived the entire crowd. To the pop tune "lean on me" he got everyone up and learning about solidarity and caring for each other.

"Diversity is all about caring for strangers," says Robbins. "And the best way to deal with the stereotypes we all have is to bring them into the light and talk about them."



Reknowned Canadian journalist and social critic Linda McQuaig is sure to spark debate with her guest presentation today!

One solution to the problem Pretending there's no nursing shortage

Some provincial governments have come up with a novel new approach to the nursing shortage: pretend it's gone away! In Ontario, budget cuts have forced layoffs of hundreds of nurses. Alberta's health minister Ron Liepert recently said he "never subscribed to the theory of a shortage of thousands of nurses." Alberta has frozen hiring, effectively cutting hundreds of nurses' jobs.

One of the results of this "magical thinking" could be the loss of thousands of the costly new graduating nurses who will be looking outside their province, or even outside the country for their first job. As we know well from the 1990s, many never come back.

The most recent shortage report, *Tested Solutions for Eliminating Canada's Registered Nurse Shortage*, demonstrates that if significant action isn't taken now, the shortage of registered nurses who provide direct, clinical care to Canadians will climb from the equivalent of nearly 11,000 full-time nurses in 2007 to almost 60,000 in 2022.

Meanwhile nurses across the country already know all too well about the long waits in ERs, the over-capacity beds and the shifts worked short one or more nurses.

One nurse quipped: "How long is the wait time for the surgery to have these government folks' heads reattached and put on right?"

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Biennium
UPDATE!

voices in union

Biennium **UPDATE!**

BC Premier welcomes delegates, salutes nurses

BC Premier Gordon Campbell gave a warm welcome to CFNU delegates yesterday (June 11), acknowledging the key role of nurses in the lives of Canadians and the strength of our public healthcare system.

"Thank-you for all that you do in providing healthcare across the country. Your members make a huge difference in people's lives."

Campbell, who has been criticized by nurses for encouraging a greater role for private for-profit healthcare delivery and requiring health authorities to use private financing to build new hospitals (P3s), said he supports public health care. "it's important to recognize the strength of our healthcare system and how lucky we are to live in a country like Canada with a healthcare system like Canada's."

Campbell commended nurse union leaders such as CFNU president Linda Silas and BC Nurses' Union president Debra McPherson for promoting healthcare solutions.

Referring to BC initiatives to increase nurses' scope of practice and education opportunities, Campbell acknowledged that "BCNU has been a strong advocate for these initiatives. Thank-you for looking for solutions." In a media scrum after his address, Campbell said, despite political differences, his government will continue to work constructively with nurses on ways to improve health care.

"Nurses don't just say we need more money, they say if we did things this way, or that way we might save money."

Dragon line dancers opened the business meeting Thursday.



Nurses working more overtime, getting hurt more

More nurses are working more overtime, shows a new report prepared by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, released to the media yesterday. There are more nurses being injured or becoming ill, resulting in rising rates of absenteeism and overtime. The study, prepared by Infometrica, updates their previous studies on rates of overtime and absenteeism in the nursing workforce and provides further insight into causes of the nursing shortage.

"Adding more nurses to the workforce is not reducing overtime or illness and injury in the workplace," says Linda Silas, RN, President of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions. "Without improvements to the nursing workplace, just adding more nurses is like adding water to a leaky boat."

More online at www.cfnu.ca



Nearly 800 nurses in the great hall at the Convention Centre.



**INTERNATIONAL
Plenary: Wednesday**

**Action
against
racism more
critical now**

Action to understand and combat racism and racial discrimination in health care is more critical than ever, given dramatically increased cultural diversity in Canada and the continued overseas recruitment of nurses.

That's what Dalhousie University nursing professor Josephine Etowa told CFNU delegates at their second plenary session June 10 "Nursing on an International Front".

"With so much migration and overseas recruitment of nurses, we have to put racism and racial discrimination in the discussion," she said. "If we don't name that issue then we cannot discuss that issue."

She cited studies indicating the negative impact of discrimination in the workplace, but she made the biggest emotional impact relating her personal struggle as a new Canadian. Eighteen years ago Ms. Etowa provided home care to clients who initially rejected her because she's black. She had to prove her competence

before clients accepted her.

"Why do you have to prove that you're capable of doing your job, because of your skin colour?" she asked. "That's what I'm talking about."

During question period, BC Nurses' Union president, Debra McPherson related an incident from her time as a student at a Winnipeg maternity ward. A large aboriginal woman was brought into hospital from the street moaning, and the ER staff claimed she was both drunk and about to deliver. It turned out she was neither pregnant nor drunk, but had suffered an intra-cranial hemorrhage.

"That could have been my mother and it offended me deeply," said McPherson, whose mother was Ojibway.

Josie Irwin of the United Kingdom's Royal College of Nurses said these incidents occur regularly in the inner city areas of London, Birmingham and Manchester.

The UK had many problems recruiting overseas nurses. "Employers did not prepare the existing workforce, leading in many cases to isolation and racial harassment."



Josephine Etowa: "Why do you have to prove that you're capable of doing your job because of your colour?" A nursing instructor at Dalhousie University, Etowa has been studying conditions for nurses of colour and aboriginal nurses. She's published what she's learned in a new book: "Anti-racist health care practice".

**Diversity: colour, background
AND generation**

Diversity does not just mean: black and white, straight or gay, young and old, etc. The diversity of individuals includes: personality and styles, introvert and extrovert, controlling types and people types, scholars and sportspeople. While it certainly includes things like gender and racial differences, it goes beyond that to include all aspects of our everyday lives.

The Generational Diversity workshop, led by Tim Gough from United Nurses of Alberta, focused on the differences between generations, behaviours, personalities, values, communication style, understanding of technology and more. He led delegates through strategies on how to build relationships across the different generations, and what role the union can play.

Group exercises reflected on past experiences, looked at difficult situations created by our generational differences, how to draw strength from our diversity, and how to tackle the communication gaps between generations.

There can be tremendous benefit to being a mentor, Tim explained, and illustrated with tools and tips for intergenerational mentoring.

Talk about diversity! BCNU members provided a great example, when nearly 20 of them brought greetings in different languages.



**BIENNIUM WORKSHOPS
LEARNING MORE**

**Pay more, get less! Nurses' key
anti-privatization messages.
Building effective advocates**

Nurses are some of the most important advocates for our public healthcare system, Kathleen Connors told participants at the "Public vs. Private Health Care" workshop. "The most trusted profession... you are key to the campaign, advocates that Canadians listen to."

Kathleen, of course, is the past President of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and the Chairperson of the Canadian Health Coalition, which she noted is celebrating its 30th birthday this year.

Kathleen and coalition coordinator Michael McBane led participants on a crash course of the messaging in the current Stop Medicare Privatization campaign. The goal is to make them into strong spokespeople and advocates.



"Health care is a human right" topped the list of values when workshop participants prioritized a number of features of health care. "Investor returns" came last.

Cross-country research shows the key message that Canadians should hear about the looming threat of privatization is "Private, for-profit health care... You'll pay more, and get less!"

**Aboriginal awareness workshop
Seven generations of residential schools, time now to heal**

"We have a huge nursing shortage in this country," says Bill Anderson, one of three facilitators to lead the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness workshop at the CFNU convention. "We can help solve it by taking advantage of the large number of unemployed First Nations youth."

"The key question," added co-facilitator Darcy Tourangeau, "is how do you tap into this young Aboriginal workforce and help them become nurses? We must ensure they gain the skills and qualifications they need to compete with other students on a level playing field."

Anderson and Tourangeau are both Saskatchewan First Nations members. The workshop's third facilitator was BCNU member Tania Dick, an RN who cares for patients in several BC First Nations communities, including her home town of Alert Bay, located off the north east coast of Vancouver Island.

"We need to approach this question holistically," says Dick. "We need to make sure we're not setting students up to fail."

The workshop took its 40 participants on a journey through 400 years of Canadian Aboriginal history, including wars, smallpox epidemics, the near destruction of the buffalo, which led to mass starvation, the reserve system, alcoholism, assimilation, residential schools, children stolen from their parents and sold in foreign countries and much more.

Tourangeau explained how governments went to great lengths to ensure people lost their status as First Nations members. That's exactly what happened to Tourangeau's father. After returning from WWII, he lost his status and had to leave his reserve. "I also think he was happy to move to Regina so his kids didn't have to go to residential school."

"Seven generations passed through the residential school system," says Anderson, "and people say we need another seven generations to solve the problems. But we don't have that time. We need to fix the problems now."



Eagle sculptures provide wonderful public art in the city.