



The Work &
Learning Network
for Research and
Policy

ANNUAL REPORT 2008 - 09

Julie Salembier, WLN Administrator

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The Work and Learning Network for Research and Policy

ANNUAL REPORT

January 1, 2008 – March 31, 2009

The *Work and Learning Network for Research and Policy*, from January 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009, continued to undertake and initiate relevant work and learning activities in its sixth year of operation. Activities were intended to support the three main areas of focus that define the WLN. They are:

1. Identify, support and disseminate findings of research projects on various issues related to work and learning.
2. Give visible presence to research integrating work and learning issues through seminar series and conferences.
3. Encourage collaboration and partnerships among researchers, practitioners and policy workers involved in the network.

WEBSITE

The Work and Learning Network website (www.wln.ualberta.ca) in 2008 site includes:

- Information about the Network – mandate, research interests, activities, a list of advisory board members.
- Upcoming events and archives of seminars, symposia and conferences.
- Follow-up PowerPoint presentations and documents to seminar presentations.
- A resource section which includes electronic links to abstracts and full text versions of relevant research papers and other resources.
- Members' profile page which contains members' practice, affiliation and research interests.
- An archive of monthly broadcasts.

New in 2008

- A 'subscribe' link to the members' mailing list.
- A copyright disclaimer and privacy statement.
- Inclusion of the U of A logo and a 'breadcrumb'.
- Audio files for the Temporary Foreign Workers symposium (6 December 2007) and the Aboriginal Youth for Hire symposium (23 April 2008).
- A link on the home page to a Temporary Foreign Workers and an Aboriginal web page which consists of a list of resources and notices.

MONTHLY BROADCASTS

The WLN broadcast initiated in June 2007 was emailed monthly to the WLN membership list and University based list serves (Faculty, Graduate and Educational Policy Events) in this reporting period. The purpose of the broadcast was to share information about upcoming events (e.g., conferences, symposia, seminars) and publications (books, articles, reports) related to work and learning. An archive of all the broadcasts was posted to the WLN website at www.wln.ualberta.ca.

Broadcast Feedback

Feedback on the relevance and utility of the broadcasts was received from two sources:

... In November 2008, the University of Ottawa, Education Department:

“Your network news has a significant place in our own Adult and Workplace Learning Educational Research Unit here in our Faculty of Education. Our graduate students are really abreast of what's going on in this topic area due to your well conceptualized broadcasts. And thanks for the report coverage.”

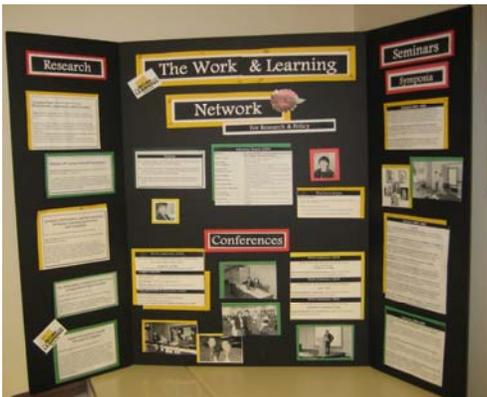
In March 2009, the Chair of Public Interest Alberta and board member of Canadian Council on Learning:

I want to take a moment to pass along my very favorable view of the work being done by the Work and Learning Network overall, and particularly in regard to your monthly newsletter, the Broadcast. It is not easy to develop an effective newsletter, and I very much appreciate your approach to getting the information out in this way. The Broadcast is very readable, comprehensive, informative and interesting. I have worked on a number of such efforts, and make use of others on a regular basis, and I really think that you are on the right track with this approach. I have forwarded it on to a number of people who are interested in this area. Keep up the fine work.

WLN MEMBERSHIP

The membership continues to ebb and flow. Monthly, after sending the broadcast, a number of emails are returned as undeliverable and are removed. To offset that, emails are received regularly from individuals who ask to be added to the members list or to join the list using the subscribe feature on the home page of the WLN website or sign up at the WLN events. There are approximately 350 members.

POSTER:



An updated tri-fold poster was exhibited at 2008-09 seminars, the Aboriginal Youth symposium in April 2008 and at the Fall 2008 conference. The poster was displayed at the Educational Policy Studies 4th Research Day on April 24, 2008. The purpose of this event is to showcase students and faculty research work and/or other activities.

EVENTS

The WLN was very active in the past 15 months hosting six seminars, one symposium and one conference.

1. SEMINAR SERIES

The following seminars were held:

February 27, 2008:

The Conference Board of Canada's Report on "Learning and Development Outlook 2007: Are we learning enough?"

Panel Presenters: **Bruce Spencer**, Professor, Centre for Work and Community Studies (Athabasca University) for a labour perspective; **Ann Wilson**, Wilson & Associates Education Consultants, representing business, and **Laurette Morris**, Director Strategic Policy and Supports, a government representative (Alberta Employment, Immigration, and Industry).

- The ninth edition of the 'Learning and Development Outlook' summarizes the results of a questionnaire sent to 3,900 Canadian organizations in the summer of 2006. In addition to facilitating benchmarking, this report provides an analysis of Training, Learning and Development (TLD) patterns and trends in Canadian organizations. The trends are presented in the context of the economic and demographic forces that are creating a skills crunch in the Canadian workforce." There were twenty-one in attendance.

March 19, 2008:

Challenges and Opportunities for an Aging Workforce

Panel Presenters: **Mildred Klassen** - Senior Policy Analyst, Labour Force Development Branch, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry; **Brian Staples** – chair of the Seniors' Action and Liaison Team (SALT); **Adele Beaudry** - Home Depot Human Resource Manager

- Drawing from international and Australian research, this seminar addressed how Lifelong Learning policies impact on women and other equity groups. The dominant discourse of Lifelong Learning promises much to many people in the new work and education order. The politics of hope is dulled when it meets with the reality of the possibilities arising from current policies of lifelong learning. Twelve attended.

October 23, 2008:

Risk and the school-to-work transition in East Germany and the U.S.

Presenter: Dr. Antje Barabasch, Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Magdeburg, Germany

- Factors of individualization, structure, post-industrialization, and unification related to school-to-work transitions of East German youth compared to American youth were explained. Destabilization of

traditional jobs in both countries has lead to rising instability and uncertainty. Six people attended. This number was low because a number of other events were concurrently scheduled to this one.

December 4, 2008:

Contemporary Lives: Navajo youth, school, work, and family

Presenter: Donna Deyhle, Educational and Ethnic Studies, University of Utah, USA

- This seminar addressed Navajo youth in relation to racial and cultural differences that impact school, work and family. Navajo's success or failure in school is part of the process of racial conflict. Subject to discrimination in workplaces and curricula, they are more academically successful when more secure in their traditionalist culture. This seminar was co-sponsored by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Department of Educational Policy Studies. Twenty-five people were in attendance.

March 5th, 2009:

Workplace learning: Initiatives and opportunities

Poster Presentation: Research posters presented the ideas of EDPS 545 (Workplace Learning) graduate students on issues related to work and learning.

Panel Presentation co-presenters: **Angela Risdon** – Manager, Learning & Development, Enbridge Pipelines Inc.; **Dave Hill** - Director, Loss Prevention, Distribution and Transmission, EPCOR; **Jason Fleming** – Corporate Trainer, All Weather Windows; **Russ Dahms** - Executive Director, Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations.

- Panelists discussed their organization's policies related to formal and informal learning with a focus on the following questions: How does your organization support learning including pre-employment, on-the-job, and/or off-the-job opportunities? What are some past or current initiatives that encourage and support workplace learning and how have they worked? What role would you like to see learning play in the future in your organization, and how can this be achieved? Roughly thirty people were in attendance

March 18th, 2009 –

Education and Work Experiences of First Nations and Métis Youth in the Oil Sands

Presenters: **Dr. Alison Taylor**, Professor in Educational Policy Studies & Director of the Work & Learning Network, University of Alberta; **Dr. Tracy Friedel**, formerly of Educational Policy Studies, U of A; **Lois Edge**, PhD student, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta;

- Findings were presented from a study which explored



the political, social, and economic influences on First Nations and Métis youths' attitudes toward further learning and higher levels of education in the municipality of Wood Buffalo, Alberta, the site of rapid industrial development related to the oil sands in the past few decades. Linked to this, some of the institutional and policy structures that support or hinder the ability of First Nations and Métis youth to find pathways leading to sustained employment with decent pay, good working conditions, and career potential were explored.

Feedback on Seminars

Email received re: The Workplace Learning Initiatives seminar held March 5, 2009

Thank you for hosting the seminar yesterday afternoon. All in all, I believe it was very successful. The guest speakers were informative, the students' posters impressive, and the snacks were fine as well. I wish you and your colleagues continuing success in your endeavors to prepare the next generation of adult educators. Thank you for making me welcome.

NALD – Seminar advertising

The Network is far reaching and goes beyond our city to New Brunswick and NALD (the National Adult Literacy Database) who assist us in advertising our seminars on their website under Edmonton events. <http://events.naldatwork.ca/browse/city?name=Edmonton>

2. ABORIGINAL YOUTH SYMPOSIUM

The WLN symposium, “Aboriginal Youth for Hire”, was held Wednesday, April 23, 2008. The planning committee consisted of Alison Taylor, Lois Edge (graduate research assistant), and Cora Weber-Pillwax in the Educational Policy Studies department.

Purpose

The purpose was to start a conversation, which would lead to research collaboration. The symposium brought together representatives and individuals affiliated with federal and provincial government ministries, representative Aboriginal organizations and governing bodies, community members, academics and researchers, and university students to share knowledge and experiences about the development and delivery of programs and services relating to employment, education and training for Aboriginal youth in Alberta's boom economy in the coming decade.

Program

Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta was the discussant/facilitator.

A panel of **federal and provincial government representatives** discussed policies and identified future directions relating to employment, education and training for Aboriginal youth in Alberta.

- **Speakers** were: **Dan Beavon**, Director, Strategic Research, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; **Evelyn Goodstriker**, Director, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Services, Alberta Education; **Claudette Rain**, Director, Aboriginal Partnerships,

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology; and **Bev Latter**, Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Planning, Alberta Employment and Immigration

A panel of **Aboriginal organizations and governing body representatives** discussed some of the issues, tensions and challenges related to the development and delivery of employment, education and training programs and services for Aboriginal youth.

- The following representatives spoke: **Charles Nokohoo**, Sustainable Employment Coordinator, Athabasca Tribal Council; **Chris Lamouche**, Business Planning Performance Measures Officer, Métis Settlements General Council; **Christie Ladouceur**, Manager Project Based Services – Youth, Labour Market Development, Métis Nation of Alberta; **Joslin Smith**, Career Counselor, Piikani Employment Services; **Margo Sitting Eagle**, Health Careers Coordinator, Treaty 7 Management Corporation

A panel of **academics and Indigenous Knowledge holders** provided a critical response to the events, speaking in the context of plans to invite the attendees and Aboriginal communities in Alberta for a follow-up symposium.

- Speakers were **Victor Gladue**, Indigenous Knowledge Holder and **Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax**

Participation

Between fifty (50) and sixty (60) people attended the symposium, which was modeled after the WLN sponsored Temporary Foreign Workers symposium of December 6, 2007.

Outcomes

A final report and some of the audio files from symposium speakers are available on the WLN website. PowerPoint presentations for speeches by Dan Beavon, Bev Latter, Christie Ladouceur, Margo Sitting Eagle and Charles Nokohoo are posted on the WLN website.

Evaluation

- Participants indicated that they found the speakers to be knowledgeable and informative. They also liked the discussion and open questions. The broad and diverse range of information from a variety of presenters was *“a day well worth it”*. Discussions provoked many interesting topics and presented issues that trouble the Aboriginal youth. *“I have thoughts of hope for all Aboriginal people”*.
- Responses to aspects of the symposium that could be improved were: *“this needs two days”*. A few felt that the title did not describe the focus. *“Why the focus on employment? It was a smaller aspect of the day than education, community empowerment, research”*. One articulated that there should have been more youth presenters for a youth focused event and input from more community members. Also there could have been more follow-up information, i.e., contact information, hand-outs with names, phone numbers and website addresses. One attendee said: *“Please stop talking about the problems we face but DO SOMETHING about the racism and discrimination we face every day”*.
- In response to **what participants would like to see the WLN address**, the following responses were written: Building partnerships; Working with youth and elders; Job retention; School systems not meeting needs of the youth; Disability; Aboriginal women’s struggles with education and employment issues; Intergenerational effects of residential schools; Learning attitudes; Addictions issues and programs; Life skills in the school curriculum; Parent involvement.

3. WLN CONFERENCE

The Work and Learning Network organized and hosted a conference on October 24-26, 2008 entitled “Perspectives on Labour Shortages: Exploring the Education-Jobs Gap”.

Conference planning committee

Members included Alison Taylor, Nickela Anderson (Conference coordinator), Julie Salembier (Administrator), Ann Wilson, Bonnie Watt-Malcolm, Carol Bolding, Charmaine Brooks, Dan Cui, Joan Schiebelbein, Jorge Sousa, Ken Garipey, Laura Servage, Sharlene Baergen-Fladager, and Ursule Critoph.

Call for Proposal

Researchers, educators, community service providers, employers, policy makers and organized labour presented and discussed issues related to the thematic questions posed in the Call for Proposals relevant to: definition of “labour shortage” and “skills shortage” and implication, responsibility and delivery for education and training, expanding accessibility for underrepresented groups, formal and informal work-related learning, determination of labour force needs and impact is the changing labour force having on civil society and the Social Economy.

Registration & Participation

There were a total 81 registrants and 43 presenters of whom 14 were students. 17 students in total attended. Another 16 individuals attended but did not register as they were keynote and panel speakers, volunteers and conference planning committee members. Nearly half of the attendees presented papers addressing the key conference questions. In total, approximately 95 people attended the conference.

Organizational affiliation of the attendees was largely from universities with approximately 27% of registrants associated with the University of Alberta. Another 27% of the registrants were affiliated with government, including HRSDC, INAC, the B.C. Ministry of Labour and Citizens’ Services and the Alberta Government. Other university and post-secondary Institutions (University of Calgary, NorQuest College, Athabasca University, University of Lethbridge, Université de Montréal, University of Western Ontario, York University, University of Toronto, and Texas State University) comprised 22% of the registrants. Community organizations were represented by the Alberta Federation of Labour, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment, Greater Edmonton Foundation - Housing for Seniors, Multicultural Health Brokers, and the Work and Learning Knowledge Centre. Employer or employer-related services participants included ECO Canada (Environmental Careers Organization), World ICU (International Competency University) and Cox Mproperi Wilson & Associates Education Consultants.

Program

There were **three keynote addresses** from academics with varied backgrounds covering areas such as economic changes, learning and work gaps, and work-related learning in Quebec. On October 25th there were eleven sessions with four round table discussions and eighteen paper presentations. On October 26th there were six sessions with eighteen paper presentations. The closing session consisted of a panel presentation with representatives from the Alberta Government, Alberta Federation of Labour, Venture Publishing (business) and the Centre for Community Enterprise (social economy).

Proceedings

The conference proceedings were burned on a CD and distributed to delegates. The proceedings include summaries of twenty papers, two panel presentations, and one poster presentation. Not all

presenters submitted a summary of their paper for inclusion in the proceedings. The proceedings are available on-line on the Work and Learning Network website (www.wln.ualberta.ca).

Feedback

Conference attendees were given the option of filling out the survey immediately after the closing panel session on Sunday or submitting their feedback on-line following the conference. In total thirty-one (31) people completed the survey, seventeen in paper format and fourteen on-line. In general, feedback was positive with 84% of attendees stating that the conference met their expectations very well or exceedingly well and 97% would possibly or absolutely consider attending another WLN event in the future.

Several respondents provided additional comments.

- ✓ *“The last plenary was excellent. Thank you for a great mix of panelists.”*
- ✓ *“I wish to thank everyone for an excellent conference this weekend at the U of A. You did an excellent job to gather expertise from a wide-range of areas.”*
- ✓ *“Thank you once again for the great work done in organizing this Conference. The opportunity to attend and present at this conference enhances my understanding and expands my perspective in work and learning. Meeting with other researchers and people interested in this area also keeps me active in the circle.”*
- ✓ *“Wonderful conference-good planning... Appreciated the theme approach...I also think it is wonderful to include graduate students”*
- ✓ *“I also want to thank the committee for the travel assistance”*
- ✓ *“I will join the membership and am profoundly encouraged by meeting several interdisciplinary faculty and grad students.”*

One area of concern that was raised by attendees pertained to having two venues on Saturday, one of the coldest days in October:

- ✓ *“Due to my physical disability I was restricted to one venue which also limited my options.”*
- ✓ *“The separation of the concurrent sessions on Saturday was unfortunate, especially the walk in the cold.”*

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. TRACKING HIGH SCHOOL APPRENTICES: EXPECTATIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND OUTCOMES

Alison Taylor, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta, Principal investigator; Co-investigator:
Wolfgang Lehmann, University of Western Ontario.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2008 – 2010.

The purpose of this research is to provide a better understanding of the impact of participation in a high school apprenticeship on young people’s subsequent education and employment decisions.

Questions to guide the research are:

- 1) Do youth apprenticeships create meaningful post-secondary alternatives that result in positive experiences and outcomes?
- 2) What are the organizational and institutional contexts that support or create barriers to positive transition experiences and outcomes for youth?

2. ALBERTA'S OFF-CAMPUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Bonnie Watt-Malcolm, Secondary Education, University of Alberta, The Faculty of Education, SAS (Support for the Advancement of Scholarship) grant. 2008-2010.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how Alberta's secondary schools currently coordinate work preparation programs and how they might improve the school to work transitions for non-college bound youth if non-traditional partners are invited to participate and alternative ways to organize these programs are considered.

3. FEMALE ENTERPRISE IN CANADA

Karen D. Hughes, School of Business & Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2005- 2009.

Women's self-employment and small business ownership (SE/SBO) has increased dramatically in Canada and other countries in recent years, sparking a great deal of debate. What are the social, economic and personal consequences of this trend? Are women gaining economically, or are they simply moving into new forms of risky, precarious work in the 'new economy'? This research uses interview and survey research to address the following questions: How women are faring economically in SE/SBO? What factors underlie their success or failure? To what extent is SE/SBO is being used by Canadian women to create workplaces more congruent with their desire for work-family balance, meaningful work, job and personal satisfaction.

4. THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY? AFTER THE LIVE-IN CAREGIVER PROGRAM

Denise Spitzer, (Principal Investigator), University of Ottawa; *Co-Investigators:* **Karen D. Hughes**, University of Alberta; Jacqueline Oxman-Martinez, Université de Montréal; Jill Hanley, McGill University; Sara Torres, University of Ottawa. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2005-2009.

This research focuses on the long-term employment experiences of women who have participated in the Canadian Live-In Caregiver Program, migrating to Canada to work as nannies, elder- and child-care providers. Using interview, survey, and focus group approaches, it examines the long-term outcomes for past participants of the LCP in terms of their employment, educational, familial, and health status. It also examines their satisfaction with their decision to participate in the LCP, and the impact of factors such as country of origin, professional and educational background, social support and geographical location on informants' experiences.

5. SERVICE LEARNING IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

Jorge Sousa, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta. Community-University Research Alliance for Southern Ontario's Social Economy (part of the SSHRC Funded Social Economy Suite). 2007 - 2009.

The purpose of this research is to determine the overall efficacy of service learning for both social economy organizations and Universities. This research will explore the aforementioned partnerships and how they can strengthen the social economy by offering

learning opportunities for individuals who are unfamiliar with the social economy. The study will target Universities and Social Economy organizations in Ontario and Alberta involved in service learning activities and partnerships. This research will focus on the benefits and challenges involved in the effective implementation service learning activities that are mutually beneficial and respectful. Moreover, this research will explore how Service Learning can serve as an introduction or entry point into the Social Economy. The purpose of this research is to determine the overall efficacy of service learning for both social economy organizations and Universities.

6. EXAMINING COMMUNITY-BASED SCHOOL FEEDING AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS IN ALBERTA

Jorge Sousa, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta. 2009.

The purpose of this study is to explore two key facets of school feeding and nutrition programs. First, understand the circumstances and impact of the food programs. Second, explore the community-based partnership model to providing school feeding and nutrition programs. The goal of this project is to investigate the different facets of school nutrition programs, with a focus on the partnership model used to deliver these programs. Those facets include the following: individual user impact, educational practices, community partnerships, and best practices for individual organizations. Therefore the purpose of this study is to investigate whether child nutrition and feeding programs are achieving the objective of ensuring that students have access to nutritious food as a contributor to their learning. Additionally, this study will investigate whether these programs are forging a stronger relationship between community-based agencies and local schools.

7. CED AND SOCIAL ECONOMY POLICY INVENTORY IN B.C. AND ALBERTA (PHASE ONE)

Jorge Sousa, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

Social Economy Research Cluster (SERC) 2008-2009.

The purpose of this study is to design a classification framework to guide the planning of the policy inventory and the analysis of the results. The intention is to use the framework to design the inventory of federal and provincial legislation, policies, programs and initiatives in B.C. and Alberta that are directly relevant to CED (Community Economic Development) and the social economy.

8. ALBERTA HEALTH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGY

Mildred Klassen, Senior Policy Advisor, Strategic Directions Division, Health and Wellness, Team member. Co-led by Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW) and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology (AAET).

AHW and AAET are co-leading the development of a provincial health research and innovation strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to provide a long-term, high level framework that will work to improve health outcomes for Albertans, the healthcare system in Alberta, and economic development opportunities in the health sector. The strategy is expected to be developed by the fall of 2009.

9. SEARCH CANADA: WWW.SEARCHCA.NET

Sarah Hayward, CEO of SEARCH Canada

SEARCH Canada is a non profit organization that works to increase the ability of health professionals and health organizations in the public health system to apply high quality evidence to practice and management decisions. The organization plays a key role in knowledge translation in Alberta, ensuring that health research plays a strong role in clinical practice, improving health delivery systems, and promoting health.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Board

The WLN Board met four times in 2008-09 to oversee WLN activities, provide suggestions, approve expenditures and make decisions for WLN seminars, symposia and the conference.

New board directors for 2008-09 are:

- Winston Gereluk, Academic Coordinator, Industrial Relations, Athabasca University, School of Business
- Karen Hughes, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and School of Business, University of Alberta (on sabbatical leave until July, 2009)
- Jorge Sousa, Assistant Professor, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta
- Lori Campbell, Manager, Community Skills and Employment Initiatives, Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines

2008 Board member departures:

- Christine Couture, Labour Force Development, Alberta Employment and Immigration
- Beth Hunter with the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations/Community Service-Learning (CS-L)
- Janice Wallace, Associate Professor, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta ...all to new work commitments.

FUNDRAISING

- In February 2008, the WLN received funding support from the Dean of Education for the amount of \$20,000 but encouraged the WLN to become financially self-sustaining.
- Funding support for the Fall Conference was applied for and successfully received from Alberta Employment and Immigration and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.
- The Department of Educational Policy Studies gave support to WLN with in-kind donations of office staff, office space and access to internet/printer.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Ursule Critoph, liaison with the Centre for the Study of Education and Work, Toronto.
- Centre for the Study of Education and Work, OISE/University of Toronto, co-sponsors of the Fall 2008 Conference.
- Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), partners in the Fall 2008 conference and funded part of the WLN sponsored Aboriginal youth symposium April 23, 2008.
- WLN, partners with the Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI) (www.labourhistory.ca/) through Joan Schiebelbein's connection.