

# 100 Years WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

1919-2019

## A CENTURY OF SOLIDARITY

ISSUE 2

Find all of your Winnipeg General Strike centennial information at:

**[MFL.CA/1919](http://MFL.CA/1919)**

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# A YEAR TO REMEMBER

2019 is shaping up to be a memorable one as Manitoba's labour movement prepares to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike. There are so many events, performances, and opportunities to mark the Strike's history that it can be difficult to keep track sometimes – even for us, and we're co-chairing the celebrations!

The level of interest and activity being undertaken by unions, arts and cultural organizations, and educational institutions just goes to show what an important event the Strike was, not only to Winnipeg's history but to the history of our country.

The legacy of the Strike is something that we can all be proud of.

By now many of you have heard about the events being presented by Manitoba's unions, but it makes sense to repeat them here.

Things get rolling on May 11th with the 1919 Social at the Ukrainian Labour Temple, presented by Myers LLP. The evening promises to be a lot of fun, with a good old-fashioned Manitoba social held in a venue which holds great importance to Manitoba's labour history. Tickets are \$10 and you can call 204-947-1400 for your chance to secure one. Tickets are limited and we regret that renovations to make the venue accessible will not be completed by this date.

On May 15th, exactly 100 years to the day that the Strike began, The Winnipeg General Strike Centennial Gala Dinner will be held at the RBC Convention Centre, presented by Manitoba Building Trades. The Gala Dinner will feature Steve Patterson of CBC's The Debaters, the Danny Kramer Band, and a performance from Strike! The Musical by Rainbow Stage. For ticket information, call 204-947-1400.

Reaching out to the community and providing free events that all can attend is very important to our labour movement. That is why three major community events are being held free of charge for the public, thanks to the generous sponsorship of Manitoba's unions.

On May 25th, the Solidarity Forever Parade, presented by UFCW Local 832, will march from the Exchange District to Memorial Park from 11:00 am until noon. Unions will be celebrating labour pride with floats, walking groups, and music.

The parade will end at Memorial Park, where the free Solidarity Forever Concert, presented by CUPE Manitoba, will be held all afternoon. In addition to wonderful entertainment, the concert will feature a Family Fun Zone with bouncy castles and face painting for the kids. Food trucks will also be on site.

Then, on June 8th at Old Market Square, Manitoba's unions will bring you the free Rise Up 100: Songs for the Next Century concert, presented by the MGEU. Stay tuned for a future announcement about the local and international talent that will headline the concert. There will also be a beer garden and food trucks on site.

On top of these main events, there are a whole host of tours, lectures, exhibits, and conferences being held this year in Winnipeg. For all of your General Strike Centennial event information, visit [mfl.ca/1919](http://mfl.ca/1919).

In solidarity,

Kevin Rebeck and Sharon Reilly  
Co-chairs of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike Centennial Committee



**Kevin Rebeck**



**Sharon Reilly**

# ACADEMIC CONFERENCE FOCUSED ON BUILDING A BETTER WORLD

**James Naylor**

The 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike is an occasion to remember, to take stock, and to think about what it all means for us today. The Building a Better World Conference is a chance to do just that.

Speakers at the event will not only be historians who can talk about the past, but will include a wide range of scholars, unionists, and other activists who can speak about the legacy of Canada's most important strike and its relevance to current struggles.

The conference will feature a range of panels discussing the explosion of working-class struggles across North America and around the world in 1919, the consequences in the decades that followed the strike for labour organizing, and the ways in which the issues of the Winnipeg General Strike remain relevant today – and continue to challenge us.

As part of the conference, we have organized a series of roundtable discussions involving leading activists from across

Canada. They will be addressing the on-going relevance of the main themes of the Winnipeg General Strike: the fight against poverty, the struggle to build an inclusive labour movement, and how labour can provide the solutions and leadership we need in the face of daunting economic, environmental, and political challenges.

Our keynote speaker will be Jane McAlevey, an experienced organizer and negotiator and widely-read author. She is a leading voice in the labour movement today, arguing that new, and old, strategies can renew unions and lead to successful organizing campaigns.

The conference will also discuss the ways in which the General Strike helped forge Winnipeg's unique political culture long after 1919. The conference will end with guided bus tours of Winnipeg General Strike history!

Registration for this exciting conference is now open – and more information is available – at our website: [1919-2019.com](http://1919-2019.com).



# THE WOMEN OF THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

Sharon Reilly

Early histories of 1919 and of the labour movement, in general, said little about the role of women. This changed over time as historians began to delve into the experiences of women and others who were overlooked in history.

Publications like *Women and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919* by Mary Horodyski, (Manitoba History, Number 11, Spring 1986\*) reflected this new approach. Through detailed research into newspapers of the day, Mary Horodyski demonstrated that women played "strong and varied roles in the strike."

Women's support of the labour movement in Winnipeg did not begin in 1919. Long before, women joined trade unions and went on strike to fight for their rights. Women also were active in working on behalf of others before 1919, assisting young mothers and their families at the All People's Missions.

When the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council asked unions to consider a general strike in May 1919, the long list of those who voted yes included municipal employees, retail clerks, garment workers and other groups with a large percentage of women workers.

Women began the General Strike, and did so four hours ahead of schedule, when 500 telephone operators ended their shift at 7:00 am on May 15th and those who were supposed to replace them refused to go to work. Women from factories, offices, and shops walked out on strike. Most of these women were not union members. Some were dismissed for daring to go on strike.

The women of the Strike included leaders like Helen Armstrong, who became a member of the Strike Committee and was arrested multiple times for encouraging women to join the walk-out. Armstrong and the Women's Labor League raised funds to run a Labor Café and provided meals for unemployed women and others during the strike.

Many more women attended meetings of the strikers at Victoria Park and elsewhere across the city. They came out for parades and

demonstrations in support of the strike. Some of these women were also arrested.

Thousands of women supported the strike through their efforts at home, struggling to care for their families with no wages coming into the household. Women also kept anti-strike delivery men out of their neighbourhoods. One driver reported that when he tried to deliver goods in the North End without having a "By Permission of the Strike Committee" sign posted on his wagon he was driven away by a group of angry women.

The role of women in 1919 also included the part played by those who opposed the strike. Some of these women participated as so-called "volunteers," filling positions vacated by striking women. Others took roles previously held by men, such as staffing gas stations.

In the years to come, those women who supported the strike continued to fight on behalf of working people. Members of the Women's Labor League organized to assist striking workers as far away as Nova Scotia. Women like Beatrice Brigden, who witnessed the Winnipeg General Strike, went on to fight for workers' rights through the CCF/NDP and the labour movement.

\*See <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/> or [www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/11/women1919strike.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/11/women1919strike.shtml)



Members of the Women's Labor League preparing relief bundles for Nova Scotia Coal Miners, c. 1925

Photo Credit: Archives of Manitoba



Women and men strikers from the Scotland Woollen Mills Co. (484 Main Street) gather at St. John's Park, Winnipeg 1906.

Photo Credit: Archives of Manitoba, Jewish Historical Society Collection 401



Winnipeg General Strike Committee, 1919, with Helen Armstrong shown, left of centre.

Photo Credit: Archives of Manitoba

# Winnipeg General Strike Community Lecture Series

Presented by the Winnipeg General Strike Centennial Committee, join us over the **noon hour** at the **Millenium Library** for these insightful learning opportunities about the Winnipeg General Strike

## March 20 - The 1919 Winnipeg General Strike Walking & Driving Tour

The 2019 edition of the popular 1919 Winnipeg General Strike Tour provides an introduction to the key events and players of the most prominent general strike in Canada's history

Lecture by Nolan Reilly, Senior Scholar, University of Winnipeg

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## March 27 - Labour Protest Songs

The labour and civil rights movements have a strong tradition of protest songs that galvanized workers and all seeking social justice. This session will introduce key protest songs along with their history.

Lecture by Mitch Podolak, Founder of the Winnipeg Folk Festival and Darryl Reilly, Host of 'Peg City Groove, CKUW Radio

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## April 3 - Reflections on Revolt: Remembering the Winnipeg General Strike

Book launch for *Magnificent Fight* by Dennis Lewycky (Fernwood Press). The book tells the history of the Strike analyzing the social, political and economic conditions of the period.

Lecture by Dennis Lewycky, Activist and Strike Tour leader

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## April 10 - Brookside Cemetery Virtual Tour

This important new tour introduces participants to a dozen key figures from the General Strike who are interned at Brookside Cemetery. Some were key figures who held leadership positions in organizing the strike. Others were workers whose stories have not been previously brought to light.

Lecture by Paul Moist, Research Associate with CCPA-Manitoba and former President of CUPE National.

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## April 17 - The Fight for a Better Life - Contemporary Lessons from the General Strike

There are many lessons to be learned from the Winnipeg General Strike. This discussion will focus on how they can inform today's struggles to build a better world.

Lecture by Kevin Rebeck, President of the Manitoba Federation of Labour and Basia Sokal, President of the Winnipeg Labour Council



In Commemoration of the 100<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike.



# STRIKE!

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Based on true events and staged  
One hundred years to the day of the climatic  
conclusion of the Winnipeg General Strike,

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## **STRIKE! THE MUSICAL**

**June 18 – June 28 and July 2 – July 5, 2019**

Re-imagined by a visionary creative team, STRIKE! THE MUSICAL  
will not only feature extraordinary performers who act, sing and dance...  
...but performers who play the score at the same time!

Manitoba's rich history of acting, singing, dancing  
and musicianship combine to create a production of  
**STRIKE! THE MUSICAL** that defines community!

If there is one event you want to take in for the  
Centenary of the Winnipeg General Strike,  
Don't miss the one-stop flagship event!

Union Sponsorship Packages Available,  
Including Group Discounts!

# MANITOBA MUSEUM EXHIBIT WILL TRANSPORT YOU BACK TO 1919

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike, the Manitoba Museum is launching an exciting new exhibition that anyone interested in the Strike will want to experience: **Strike 1919: Divided City**.

Geographically situated on the corner where major events of the 1919 strike occurred, where giant rallies were held and free meals were provided to striking women out of the former Strathcona Hotel, the Manitoba Museum is uniquely equipped to provide an immersive experience of the strike.

The Museum's much-loved Urban Gallery will be transformed to Winnipeg, 1919. Using digital architectural projections of archival film and photographs, audio-scapes of recreations of conversations, and artifacts from the period, visitors will be placed at the epicenter of a city undergoing a great transformation.

Video projections and audio experiences will provide an historical re-enactment of strike conditions, including:

- The first days / early euphoria - mass meetings, marches, and walk outs
- Deprivation / resolve - lack of basic goods, solidarity, boycotts, rallies, and newspaper reports
- Violent conflict - special police, riot act, and arrest of strike leaders

Access to the Strike 1919 exhibition, which will run from March 22, 2019 to January 8, 2020, is included with purchase of a Museum Gallery admission.

For information about group tours, please contact 204-988-0626 or [programs@manitobamuseum.ca](mailto:programs@manitobamuseum.ca).

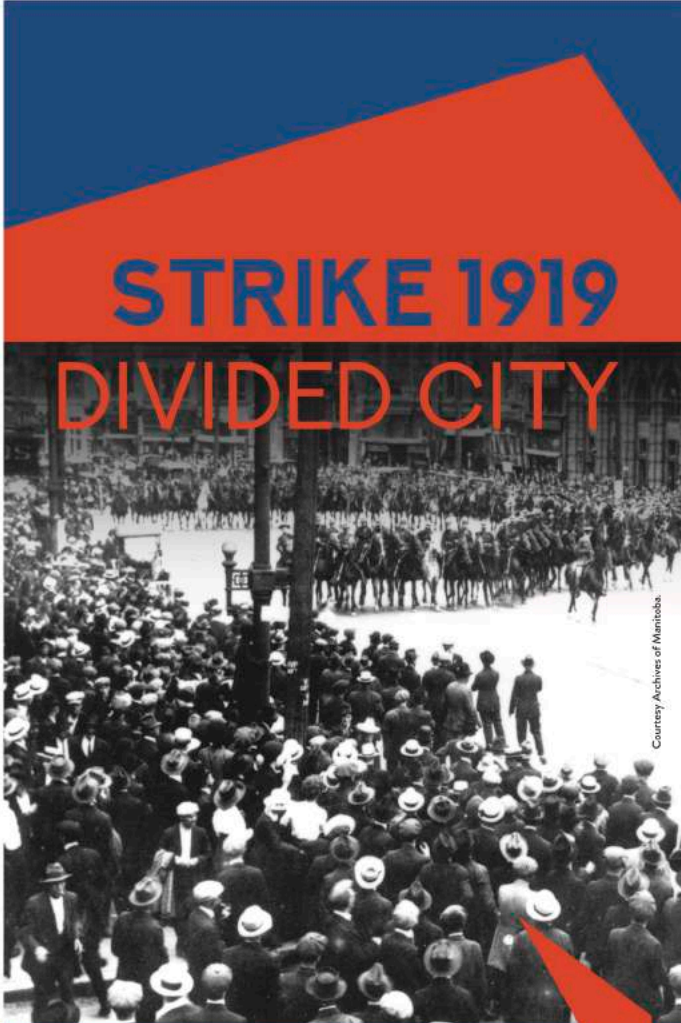
## From Talk to Table: Strike 1919, April 6 from 2 - 4:30 pm

Join the Manitoba Museum's Curator of History, Dr. Roland Sawatzky, for an in-depth tour of Strike 1919: Divided City.

Following the gallery tour, join Dr. Sawatzky at Little Brown Jug for further conversation, while enjoying a pint of aptly named "1919" beer. The tour will begin at the Manitoba Museum and last approximately 1 hour.

General \$26 + GST / Members \$21 + GST. Ticket price includes one alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverage of your choosing.

Light snacks and additional beverages will be available for purchase.



**STRIKE 1919**  
**DIVIDED CITY**

Royal North-West Mounted Police face off with strikers on Bloody Saturday, June 21, 1919.

**MAR 22, 2019 – JAN 8, 2020**

MANITOBA MUSEUM  
@ManitobaMuseum

Courtesy Archives of Manitoba

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