



B.C.'s largest health care union turns 75 with celebrations across province

For the past several weeks, the 50,000 members of the Hospital Employees' Union have been holding local events to celebrate this milestone birthday for HEU – a union that has a long and proud tradition of fighting for workers' rights, human rights and social justice.

It all began in 1944, when separate men's and women's unions at Vancouver General Hospital joined forces, bringing a diverse range of occupations into one union, and supporting each other's bargaining demands with strong, unified voices.

Together, they knew they could improve working and caring conditions for health care workers across British Columbia, as more and more locals formed, and became part of a growing provincial union.

On October 13, 1944, the Trades and Labour Congress chartered the Hospital Employees' Federal Union Local 180 – later renamed the Hospital Employees' Union.

From those humble beginnings with a few hundred members, HEU has grown to become B.C.'s largest health care union. Along the way, we've organized hospitals, care homes, community services, and First Nations health centres – representing members in the facilities, community health, community social services, independent and private sectors.

We've created history in the labour movement – becoming one of the first unions to negotiate same-sex spousal benefits, winning Supreme Court decisions around certifying and organizing First Nations workers, and securing collective bargaining as a charter-protected right.

We have a lot to celebrate on HEU Day – October 13 – especially this year on our 75th anniversary.

“On behalf of the Provincial Executive, I'd like to wish each and every HEU member a happy 75th anniversary,” said HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. “And most important of all, thank you for the dedication and hard work you bring to the job every shift, providing quality care to British Columbians.

“I am extremely proud of our members and proud of our union's legacy. I can't wait to see what history we create together next.”

October 13, 2019