



## **HEU renews commitment to equity and inclusion on International Women's Day**

*"Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it."*

On International Women's Day (IWD), the words of feminist, politician and educator Rosemary Brown are especially inspiring.

Brown was the first Black woman to be elected to a Canadian legislature, serving as a BC NDP MLA from 1972 to 1986.

She spoke those words over 40 years ago, but they remain as powerful and meaningful today.

IWD is an opportunity to celebrate women's many achievements, and to recommit to standing up against violence, exploitation, exclusion, economic insecurity and the many forms of discrimination women continue to face in their daily lives.

"There's no question, women in 2019 are still fighting an uphill battle to achieve true equity," says Jennifer Whiteside, HEU secretary-business manager.

"And the struggle is even greater for racialized women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, immigrant and refugee women, and women who are discriminated against for their gender identity or sexual orientation."

As a union with a membership that is 85 per cent women, HEU has a long history of working to achieve equity for women in the workplace, the community, and at the bargaining table.

This past year, with the repeal of Bills 29 and 94, the union succeeded in regaining rights that had been eliminated through legislation by the BC Liberals in 2002. That legislation had facilitated the largest mass firing of women workers in Canadian history.

"And most recently, we were able to negotiate important provisions in our 2019 facilities subsector collective agreement," says Whiteside, "which secure access to special leave for members dealing with sexual or domestic violence, improve parental benefits, and provide access to compassionate leave for pregnancy loss."

She also notes that HEU's 2018 biennial convention affirmed a wide-ranging diversity, equity and inclusion mandate that will review and guide equity practices at all levels of the union.

Convention delegates elected the union's first woman president, Barb Nederpel, and Betty Valenzuela became the first Filipina-Canadian elected financial secretary.

"As we move toward our diversity and equity goals," Whiteside says, "I'm reminded of another one of Rosemary Brown's convictions that also rings true today: 'We must open the doors, and we must see to it they remain open, so that others can pass through.'"

February 7, 2019