



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

Remembering the herstory of International Women's Day

"Women and men united to end violence against women and girls"
– United Nations IWD 2009

As the largest union of women in British Columbia, the Hospital Employees' Union is proud to join sisters and brothers at home and around the world as we celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) on Sunday, March 8.

This year marks the 100 anniversary of IWD. It's come a long way since its beginnings in 1909. Fast forward to 1975 on the timeline, and that's the year the United Nations declared International Women's Day to be a global event. Now, each year, March 8 is when we in Canada, and groups and governments in more than 50 countries around the world, recognize women's achievements, struggles and worth.

Here is a brief chronology of a few significant points in the herstory of International Women's Day, with thanks to the United Nations, and a nod to Status of Women Canada, for the information.

1909

In accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day was observed across the United States on 28 February.

1910

The Socialist International, meeting in Copenhagen, established a Women's Day, international in character, to honour the movement for women's rights and to assist in achieving universal suffrage for women. The proposal was greeted with unanimous approval by the conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, which included the first three women elected to the Finnish parliament. No fixed date was selected for the observance.

1911

As a result of the decision taken at Copenhagen the previous year, International Women's Day was marked for the first time (March 19) in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, where more than one million women and men attended rallies. Less than a week later, on March 25, the tragic Triangle Fire in New York City took the lives of more than 140 working girls, most of them Italian and Jewish immigrants. This event had a significant impact on labour legislation in the United States, and the working conditions leading up to the disaster were invoked during subsequent observances of International Women's Day.

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1913-1914

As part of the peace movement brewing on the eve of World War I, Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. Elsewhere in Europe, on or around March 8 of the following year, women held rallies either to protest the war or to express solidarity with their sisters.

1917

With two million Russian soldiers dead in the war, Russian women again chose the last Sunday in February to strike for "bread and peace". Political leaders opposed the timing of the strike, but the women went on anyway. The rest is history: four days later, the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional government granted women the right to vote. That historic Sunday fell on February 23 on the Julian calendar then in use in Russia, but on March 8 on the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere.

1945

The *Charter of the United Nations*, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right.

1975

In 1975, during the International Year of Women, the United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day on March 8.

1977

In December 1977, the General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace to be observed on any day of the year by Member States, in accordance with their historical and national traditions. In adopting its resolution, the General Assembly recognized the role of women in peace efforts and development, and urged an end to discrimination and an increase of support for women's full and equal participation.

As a Member State, Canada followed the United Nations' lead, and chose March 8 as International Women's Day.

The theme from the United Nations for International Women's Day this year is "Women and men united to end violence against women and girls".

More information on IWD and the UN's 2009 message can be found at www.un.org/events/women/iwd/2009.

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