



# off the shelf

## ***Newsletter of Vancouver and Gibson Public Library Workers***

### ***Self Funded Leave***

By Peter DeGroot

Imagine taking an extended leave from work to travel, or take some courses, or just hang out with family and friends. Now imagine taking that same leave while still getting paid every two weeks. That is what self-funded leave is all about.

a period of time. The balance of one's salary is kept in the bank until the leave of absence begins. Once on leave, the remainder of one's earning are paid out to every second week. There will be variations on the timelines, but the most

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The idea for introducing this plan is not a new one. Terry Carr brought the idea forward to management almost twenty years ago. In April of 1992, the union and management agreed to form a joint committee "to review the subject of employee self-funded leave of absence". (Schedule 'F' of the Collective Agreement – page 50). In the recent round of contract negotiations, the Bargaining Committee was able to get commitment from our employer that the plan would be in place by the end of June 2004. The plan will be available for both full-time staff and regular part-time staff (number of regular hours required has not yet been determined).

How does self-funded leave work? The concept is to work at a reduced wage for

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- CUPE BC News
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common example from other institutions that have self-funded leave is “four over five”. In that scenario an employee works for four years at 80% of their salary. In the fifth year, the employee does not work, but continues to get paid 80% of their salary.

The joint committee is working on the logistics of implementing the plan and

will be sending out notice once everything is in place. Now is the time to begin considering if self-funded leave is a good option for you. Over the next couple of months ask yourself if you could get by with a reduction in salary, and ask yourself what would you do with all that time off!



“But your sign SAYS Please Disturb”

## **International Women's Day**

**The official day is March 8, but the event is being held on Saturday March 6, 2004. Gather at the Burrard Skytrain Station at 11am and walk over to Library Square for a rally and visit information booths during the afternoon.**



**six in the square**

*Did you know that last year's fifth annual all staff conference included 46 sessions with over 400 attendees and almost 1,000 seats filled for the sessions!*

VPL's 6<sup>th</sup> annual all staff conference is set for May 19 and 20, 2004. Our program is shaping up to be a blast! We have had some incredibly fun, original and, of course, useful ideas from staff for programs including a few suggested repeats of past, popular sessions. This year's keynote is scheduled for the last day of the conference, a change from last year, because we want you to stay for the post-keynote dinner and party! And, in the spirit of this year's special salute to the Year of the Monkey, we've drummed up a plan to keep everyone *amused* and *upbeat* and *synchronized(?)* before the evening feast. Please join us and mark your calendars today!

Your Staff Conference Committee (we will post this year's Program on the Staff Intranet toward the end of March)

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## *Vancouver Sun Run*

*Sunday April 18, 2004*

*VPL will be having an entry at this very popular event. Contact **Linda Melville** ([lindamel@vpl.ca](mailto:lindamel@vpl.ca)) if you are wanting to walk, run or stroll with the VPL group.*

# Ayahuasca Retreat in Peru

By Arthur Gillard

Here in Vancouver it is easy to obtain the materials to make ayahuasca, the potent plant based brew used by indigenous people in the amazon for millennia for healing and spirit journeys. However, wanting to go closer to the source for my introduction to this plant teacher, recently I traveled with two close friends to attend an ayahuasca retreat in Peru.

The retreat took place at the Corto Maltés Amazonia Lodge, on the banks of the Madre de Dios River. We were surrounded by the amazon rain forest, with its amazing diversity of plant and animal life. Being away from the stress and distractions of modern life was healing in itself and definitely enhanced the experience. There were no media available during the retreat, and not knowing what was happening in the outside world helped me to realize that everything important was happening right there – it was the inner work we were doing that really mattered.

The ayahuasca experience itself is hard to describe. It felt something like dreaming or dying. The ayahuasca session is a crucible in which psychological and spiritual processes occur at a much greater level of intensity than is typical in everyday life, enabling one to learn rapidly and deeply about life, mind, relationships and spirit.

Members of the group reported a wide variety of experiences. Some people had visions, for others the trip mostly involved their thought processes or emotions. One person felt she was dying, surrounded by white light, her body dissolving into nothingness. Another reported feeling enlightened in the present moment, for the first time – after years of serious Zen meditation. A few people battled inner demons in one way or another. One person felt that ayahuasca was essentially an artificial alteration of his perceptions, though most people felt that ayahuasca revealed deeper truths about life. Each person had a unique experience, in fact each session for each person was unique.

We did three sessions altogether. Each time we would gather in the dining area of the retreat center, with a pillow, blanket, water, and whatever else we would need for the overnight session. We would walk together down a dark path into the forest, lit by small torches about every two to three meters. We gathered in a special building used only for ayahuasca sessions. Diego, the leader of the group, would say some prayers, and then one by one we would go to him to receive the medicine. When the ayahuasca started to take effect, Diego would begin to chant and play his guitar. His beautiful chanting was very soothing and centering, and was a valuable and helpful part of the sessions.

For me ayahuasca brought up whatever I needed to experience in the present moment. I found it to be a very harsh teacher. Whenever I tried to resist what was being shown to me, the experience would become more intense and unpleasant – one of the central lessons for me is that it is better to let go, to surrender to the experience.

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Some concepts that I had understood in an abstract way I experienced at a much deeper level. One of these concepts is impermanence. I had grasped that concept on a superficial intellectual level, but didn't really understand it. During my first and third ayahuasca sessions, I entered into states of intense suffering that I was absolutely convinced would never end – even death would not release me. Yet those states did pass.

At another point I found myself spontaneously breathing out love into the world. It was a subtle experience but very distinct. This is something I had practiced in the past, but which I hadn't really felt deeply. What had been an intellectual exercise before became an experiential reality during the ayahuasca session. Since then I've occasionally been able to practice this technique and genuinely feel it.



Left to right: Sohan, Nicole, Arthur

Ayahuasca also helped me to see that a great deal of what I experience is a projection of my mind, which interferes with my ability to see the world – inner or outer – with clarity.

I had read and thought about being centered and experiencing the moment as it is, without trying to grasp or resist. Under the influence of ayahuasca, this quality of mind is vitally important, and I believe I am now more capable of being that way in daily life.

In the second session one of my friends was having a very intense, difficult time, and at one point all of us gathered around her and were chanting to her. It felt wonderful to be part of a circle of caring, giving love and attention to a friend in need. During the first session I had a difficult time, and others helped me; now I found myself on the other side of that equation and it felt wonderful to take that role for her.

During the third experience, when I was suffering intensely regarding karma from past actions – basically feeling emotions I needed to feel but had always avoided – I feel I was “burning karma” at that time, doing some of the suffering I needed to do. I feel clearer now, as if my karmic load has lightened a bit. (For those who prefer psychological jargon: I achieved a cathartic release of repressed emotion.)

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No matter how difficult the session was, when the effects started to wear off – when I was no longer tripping – I felt happy and centered. So glad to be alive, to breathe, to be in this space with people I love. This, for me, is a wonderful aspect of the ayahuasca experience. First I go through the difficult part, then I feel wonderful – it's the exact opposite of taking a drug, feeling good for a while, then experiencing some sort of hangover.

It seems to me that the best way to do ayahuasca is in this sort of ritual setting. The medicine can teach a lot about relationships, and how to give and receive love. Sharing the experience with my fellow travelers afterwards was as significant as the ayahuasca session itself. The chanting and singing was an important part of it and the opening and closing of the ceremony helped to put the experience in context.



These were the huts we stayed in, two people per hut.

I believe that ayahuasca, used properly, can be a catalyst to accelerate personal and spiritual growth. You still have to go through your process, but this medicine can speed things up. It shows you what you need to work on and puts you in a state where you can do some intense learning. Ayahuasca, in my experience, works very well in the context of an ongoing spiritual practice such as meditation.

I would recommend the ayahuasca experience to anyone who is seriously interested in spiritual or psychological work. More information about the particular retreat that I attended may be found at <http://www.ayahuasca-wasi.com>. More information on ayahuasca, go to [www.maps.org](http://www.maps.org), or [www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org).

## ***CUPE BC Library Workers' Conference***

***March 11-13, 2004***

***Metrotown Hilton: Burnaby***

**Contact:** [info@cupe.bc.ca](mailto:info@cupe.bc.ca) or call 604-291-9119. Also contact Jim Gorman, [jgorman@cupe.ca](mailto:jgorman@cupe.ca), 604-291-1940.

# March For Peace

*A Global Day of Action*

## **When:**

*11:00 AM  
Saturday March 20*

## **Where:**

*Cities around the World*

*In Vancouver:* Gather at

## **Peace Flame Park**

(south end of Burrard Bridge)  
at 11:00 AM and walk to Sunset Beach.

## **Noam Chomsky**

*will be one of many  
speakers at the rally  
in Vancouver.*

Contact Mark Whittam

@

([markwhi@vpl.ca](mailto:markwhi@vpl.ca)) if you'd like  
to join the CUPE391 group.

## **Perpetual War**

- Tons of depleted uranium left in Iraq and Kuwait after the 1991 Gulf War: **40**
- Iraqi child death rate in 1989 [per 1,000 births]: **30**
- Iraqi child death rate in 1999 [per 1,000 births]: **131**
- Percentage increase in cancer rates in Iraq between 1991 and 1994: **700**
- Number of pounds of Agent Orange and other herbicides U.S. dropped in the Vietnam War: **100 million**
- Percentage of U.S. military spending that would ensure basic necessities to everyone in the world: **10**

\* Figures Compiled by  
Jackson Thoreau

**Get Active - Not Apathetic**

**If you want your voice heard  
on issues that matter to you**

- Lobby your MLA or local politician
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper
- Sign a petition
- Participate in a rally or information picket
- Help distribute information to co-workers
- Phone other members at home after work
- Go to a union meeting
- Attend a community meeting on service cuts
- Help plan other actions
- Work to build coalition with other community groups

# CUPE BC

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## CUPE joins student tuition hike protests

February 4, 2004

PRINCE GEORGE – CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill flipped pancakes at the University of British Columbia and joined a "skate-in" here on Feb. 4 as part of the nationwide student protest against rising tuition fees.

"Why do we care about skyrocketing fees?" asked O'Neill in a blistering speech to the hundreds of protesters gathered outside a Liberal fund-raising dinner attended by Premier Gordon Campbell.

"We care because our members work in colleges and universities. We care because they have children who attend those institutions. We care because those fee hikes affect our families and they hurt our communities."



O'Neill also took a shot at local MLA Shirley Bond whose new apprenticeship program was hit with scandal this week over the firing of a program manager who allegedly fudged exam marks to make the program look good. Bond is the advanced education minister in charge of the embattled program.

"First the Liberals shut working-class kids out of the colleges and universities with exploding tuition fees. Then they tell them that they will earn six bucks an hour as a 'training wage'. Now, if they opt for an apprenticeship, the training program's credibility is in question.



"What are they to do? Do the Liberals in Victoria care? No," he said, pointing to the construction industry diners watching from inside the civic centre. "They seem quite content to watch the future builders of our province shoulder huge debt loads, work for peanuts or waste their precious time in a suspect training program."

Organized by the Canadian Federation of Students, the event was applauded by O'Neill as a first step in the build-up to provincial elections in May 2005.

"The struggle to unseat a corrupt and unfair government often starts with students," he said. "The slogan 'Be reasonable: Demand the impossible' is as inspiring today in B.C. as it was in the streets of Paris in 1968, as far as I'm concerned."

Earlier, O'Neill joined the student protest at UBC where the CFS had set up a pancake breakfast to assist hungry students who are being hit with a doubling of fees on many campuses.

## Don't break our hearts, Christy!

February 13, 2004

PORT MOODY, BC - On the day before Valentine's Day, frontline community social service workers presented Children and Families Minister Christy Clark with a gigantic valentine asking her to stop the cuts to society's most vulnerable.

The valentine asked Clark to mend broken hearts by restoring funding for community social services and halting community living restructuring until a full audit of the ministry is completed.

'These cuts have broken our hearts,' said Eva-Marie Trebell, a member of CUPE local 1936 and residential care worker for severely disabled adults. 'We have seen people suffer and with more cuts expected, we are afraid for our jobs and the people we serve.'

'We do this work because we care deeply for the people we serve and it pains us when we see them neglected and mistreated,' said Trebell.

The Liberals have cut more than \$100 million from services for people with disabilities, children, women, and families in need.

The valentine read:

'Dear Christy:

Happy Valentine's Day! Welcome to your new job!

Since you have just started, we wanted to let you know about the work we do and how we have been feeling about your government lately.

Community social service workers help society's most vulnerable live with dignity and respect. We provide services for women fleeing abusive relationships, adults with developmental disabilities, and children in violent homes. These are people with nowhere else to turn.



We do this work because we care deeply about the people we serve. It breaks our hearts to watch women's centers close and group homes shut their doors. When our workload increases so much that we can't provide proper care, it hurts. The people we serve are feeling neglected and we are feeling like you don't care about us.

We know balanced budgets are important. But you are balancing it on the backs of society's most vulnerable. We think that's wrong.

So we are sending this valentine with the hopes that you will mend our broken hearts. Your government has cut 100 million dollars from the ministry of children and families. That money should be put back to ensure that society's most vulnerable are properly protected. We care and we hope you do!

Don't break our hearts!

All of our love,

BC Community Social Service Workers'

Source: CUPE.BC

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# News

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The voting is over, the votes have been counted, and we have a winner for this year's Labour Website of the Year competition.

With over 5,500 votes cast for nearly 470 sites, we have the first-ever Canadian winner of the annual award: CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, whose website at <http://www.cupe.ca> received nearly 700 votes. More details, and vote totals for all of the top ten sites, can be found here:

<http://www.labourstart.org/lwsoty/>

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From LabourStart...

The launch of our brand-new radio station, Radio LabourStart, began broadcasting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on the Internet.

Radio LabourStart contains a mix of news, views and "songs to fan the flames of discontent". The show plays songs of struggle, protest and labour, such as Woody Guthrie singing his classic "This Land is Your Land", Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind", Pete Seeger's rendition of "Casey Jones (The Union Scab)", Bruce Springsteen's "Ghost of Tom Joad", and many more. Today and every day of the week the broadcast includes the 3-minute labour news report produced by the Workers Independent News Service (WINS).

If you have a sound card and speakers on your PC, and an Internet connection, you can start listening today to our regular daily one hour broadcasts. You can also learn more about this very exciting project and find out how you can be part of it, here:

<http://radio.laborstart.org/>

Eric Lee

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## Useful Websites:

[www.cupe.bc.ca](http://www.cupe.bc.ca) (provincial CUPE website)  
[www.cupe391.ca](http://www.cupe391.ca) (our very own website)  
[www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) (independent world news)  
[www.straightgoods.com](http://www.straightgoods.com) (national news with bite)

***Congratulations to Heather Inglis*** on her new two year position with CUPE National as Equality Representative for British Columbia. This position will allow Heather to address issues surrounding pay equity, racism and discrimination. Her work on these issues will have benefit for CUPE 391, the provincial union movement and the larger community.

Though her last day at VPL was on February 19th, Heather will remain active with CUPE 391 as well as maintaining her position on the CUPE BC Library Committee.

Please join me in wishing Heather the very best in her new endeavours.

Peter DeGroot  
President  
CUPE391

Off The Shelf is published by CUPE 391 and edited by Lorne MacDonald.

Thanks to all who have contributed to this issue, and apologies to others who's submissions may not have made it in this issue. There's always the next issue.

CUPE 391 is:

**President (1 year):** [Peter DeGroot](#)

**Vice President (2 years):** [Ed Dickson](#)

**Vice President (1 year):** [Audrey Fenema](#)

**Secretary Treasurer (2 years):** [Gerard Batty](#)

**Recording Secretary (1year):** [Peggy Watkins](#)

**Members at Large (1 year):** [Andrea Galbraith](#), [Kristy Hennings](#), [Wendy Sokolon](#), [Mark Whittam](#)

**Member at Large - Gibson's Liason (1year):** Lisa Housden

**Trustee (3 years):** [Daniela Esparo](#)

**Trustee (2 years):** [Gillian Doan](#)

**Trustee (1 year):** [Judi Walker](#)

## *Environmental Awareness Committee*

*By Keith Edwards*

### *Recycling Reminders for Staff:*

- Bindery will cut down *paper* for P-Slips (3 X 5 slips of paper for the public). Pack the one sided paper sheets in neat piles of 8.5 X 11, 8.5 X 14 or 11 x 17 in marked boxes without any staples or paper clips. When cut, these would be then sent to Supplies and Printing for future use.

- *Books from branches* should be marked on the boxes as gifts or recycling. Please keep the paper with paper and books with books as they do not go in the same place.

- *Cash spools* can be sent to Keith Edwards in History via shipping or be given to places like Urban Source for reuse, located at 3126 Main St., near 14th. Visit the website: [www.urbansource.bc.ca](http://www.urbansource.bc.ca) or ph: 604-875-1611. (That is where I take them). Please mark them for me instead of just recycling as they may get dumped in the garbage. Thanks for those who have bothered to send them.

- *Elastics* can be ordered through supplies, or if your in Central, go to Shipping and Receiving and pick them up there yourself. They are a mixed bundle of large and small, but can save you money from supplies if you save your own as well.

- *Inkjet* printer cartridges can be reused instead of thrown out too! Some places give shopping points for their returns; or send them to Rita Contois in Systems at Central, Level 7 who collects them and gets the points.

- *Paperclips* can be reused rather than thrown away when staff recycles or shreds the unwanted bundles of paper in their areas.

- *Tattletape* (green) is saved and reused. Keith collects them from Central and is taken to Urban Source. They can't get enough of this stuff!

*Number 4 and 5 plastics* can be added to the Vancouver Blue Box recycling pick-up, so watch your products that you discard. This includes many of the yogurts, bubble containers and even some of the VHS cassette containers that would otherwise be thrown out. Send them to me, Keith, if you do not have a place to recycle them.

*Vancouver includes #1,2,4 & 5 into their Blue Box collection service.*

**website:** [www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/engsvcs/solidwaste](http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/engsvcs/solidwaste)

**Recycling Hotline: 604-323-7710**