

CUPE BC 2023 CONVENTION RACIALIZED WORKERS COMMITTEE REPORT

Bonjour, Namaste, Bula, Sasri Akhal, Hola, Salam, Moshi Moshi, Aloha,
Annyeonghaseyo, Ni Hao, Pryvit, Hallo!

This report was written on the unceded and ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Katzie, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo, and Stolo first nations. These lands are where we live, work, learn, educate, and play with knowledge and leaders helping us to change the future with truth and reconciliation with the Indigenous caretakers of Turtle Island and the world.

Awareness

The Racialized Workers Committee has for the first time in many years been blessed with a full complement of committee members. While the Committee has undergone changes and losses in the membership tally, the focus on continued growth has resulted in the full Committee that exists today. Our Committee also shared some of our members who sat on multiple committees. We would like to acknowledge all members' contributions and work on the Committee. They all worked so hard on sharing stories, ideas, points of view and information that was used to carry out the Committee Action Plan. Our Committee Action Plan and resolutions were also driven by the [CUPE National Anti-Racism Strategy](#), of which we are extremely proud.

An organization is only as good as its culture – and building that culture is not only a role for Human Resources and management. It is every worker's responsibility. We can all help make our workplaces safer by understanding what systemic racism is, and what our own unconscious biases are. We did a lot of work on that in the Committee this term, and we urge all of our friends to do the same. We thank the friends and allies who helped us in this work. The 2021-2023 Committee would like to give special appreciation to Anusha Balram, Nicholas Angrignon, Sarah Cibart, Greg Taylor, Darci Schmid, Dan Gawthrop, and retired staff Janet Szliske for all the time, effort, resources, and consultations – both on and off work times – to meet deadlines and create working spaces that were productive for all.

When it comes to education, it was important for us as a committee to think about the topics that resonate with working people who are Indigenous, Black, and Racialized. But sometimes those topics were triggering for us as racialized people, even though it was necessary to work on them to build awareness or understanding. Our Committee experienced a lot in our work this term, and it was difficult as well as a source of growth for us. We noticed that sometimes support is hard to come by, and we look forward to

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building more trauma-informed approaches to instituting workplace remedies like education and training.

Anti-Racism Data Engagement

In Spring 2022, we concluded work on CUPE BC's participation in the government's Anti-Racism Data Engagement consultations. To recap, the Committee held focus groups with a total of 234 Indigenous, Black, and Racialized workers and their families to talk about how folks would like to see their information collected (or not collected) by the government for the purposes of anti-racism work. Some of the focus groups were supported by and included the CUPE BC Indigenous Committee.

We are incredibly pleased to report that the [Anti-Racism Data Act](#) was passed into law in June 2022! We should all be extremely proud that some of the important issues that CUPE BC focus group participants raised are directly reflected in the legislation, such as the need for transparency as to why any race-based information is being collected, that the way this legislation is enacted should be decided by a group that includes Indigenous, Black and Racialized voices, and that any race-based information can only be collected by the government specifically for the purposes of advancing racial equity and eliminating systemic racism.

Our work is not complete in the fight against racism, but we are so proud to be able to connect with our communities and participate in historical advancements in which we can visibly see and show that work is being done and that anti-racism strategies are working.

BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner Inquiry into Hate in the Pandemic

In Summer 2022, the office of the BC Human Rights Commissioner conducted a consultation with the community about Indigenous, Black and Racialized people's experiences of racism during the pandemic. CUPE BC was invited to participate. This was right on the heels of the Anti-Racism Data focus groups, and we were burnt out with that heavy work. We decided to leverage the data we collected from that, and CUPE National staff shared the findings in the Inquiry into Hate in the Pandemic, so that participants didn't have to take on more emotional labour by engaging directly in the Inquiry. Staff, including our staff advisors, wrote a report for the Inquiry and attended the consultations.

The Recommendations of the Human Rights Commissioner on addressing hate was published on March 7, 2023 in multiple languages including Chinese, Punjabi, Farsi,

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Tagalog, Arabic, Vietnamese, Hindi, French, Spanish and Korean. While we are sad that hate crimes against all types of people who experience marginalization increased during the pandemic, we are proud to hear the strong voices of the 234 anti-racism engagement participants reflected in the recommendations of the Human Rights Commissioner such as that survivors need culturally appropriate help to navigate the legal system, that online hate should be taken more seriously, and that the safety of frontline workers should be paramount when planning for times of crisis – because too many workers who supported communities through the pandemic experiences experienced racism from the public. We hope that our work this term will help anti-racism goals on a provincial level, and we look forward to doing more of this work next term.

Building Capacity & Term Completion

Our Committee has gelled and grown in many ways. We have members who have taken their work and experiences on the Committee back to their home locals to manifest positive change. Several of our members have taken on new roles in the union – as officers of their local, member facilitators working with Union Education, and as members of other provincial or convention committees. This is an important component of the work of the Racialized Workers' Committee: to promote equity and representation throughout union structures. Just as we advocate for racialized workers and the unique issues we face, we also must build our folks up, encourage their personal growth as activists, and support their taking on roles throughout our union – this is one of the many ways we can ensure our union, in all its facets, looks like the members we serve.

In the dawn of our time together, we feel that the CUPE BC Racialized Workers Committee have been able to create a buzz of awareness and anticipation for new information and recommendations to the Executive Board on a consistent basis. The anticipation and lead up to events and information like the cultural events and information background, and the continued success of an informative Black History poster. The CUPE National Anti-Racism Strategy is a strong tool to help workplaces progress out of colonized procedures. The Committee highly recommends its use to change the way we all think and to break existing barriers.

Our creative minds and ears-to-the-ground approach to what is happening around us has helped us manifest recommendations, resolutions, and revitalization. As well, we have left our future Committee with progressive ideas and topics to help with the goal of having racism-free workplaces now and forever!

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Respectfully submitted:

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