

CUPE BC 2023 CONVENTION UNIVERSITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

The CUPE BC Universities Committee consists of the Presidents or designates representing ten locals. These are Locals 116 and 2950 from the University of British Columbia (UBC), Local 3338 from Simon Fraser University (SFU), Locals 917, 951 and 4163 from the University of Victoria (UVic), Local 3799 from the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), Local 3386 from Royal Roads University, Local 4879 from Thompson Rivers University, and Local 2278, which has members at both UBC and UNBC. The Committee functions as the coordinating body for CUPE workers at these universities and liaises with CUPE workers at other post-secondary institutions in BC and in other provinces. Our meetings provide important opportunities for the Committee to discuss common concerns and plan strategies on a sectoral basis.

The Universities Committee met on November 8, 2022 and January 16, 2023 to develop strategies around significant issues facing our sector. The 2022/2023 term focused on preparations for 2022/2023 Collective Bargaining and supporting Truth & Reconciliation.

2023 Bargaining

Most universities' collective agreements expired on March 31, 2022. Locals meet as the Universities Coordinated Bargaining Committee (UCBC) to share updates and strategies. Wages and compensation are a primary concern throughout the sector, with many locals having now reached agreed settlements. We have seen COLA (cost of living) language introduced for years 2023 and 2024, thanks to the efforts of the BCGEU during their strike action in 2022. While workers are struggling to make ends meet, this will help out.

Recruitment and retention issues in post-secondary institutions are causing some employees to be tasked with high workloads, exacerbating stress and mental health issues within the workplace. Remote work language has been negotiated, although it has not ensured that equitable access is given to employees.

Layoffs

Locals are seeing numerous layoffs through 2023. Positions were eliminated, hours reduced due to budget cuts, up to 4% at UVic. This is on the heels of international and domestic enrolment shortfalls.

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Truth & Reconciliation

The Committee spent a day at the Musqueam Cultural Centre and visited the UBC Residential School History and Dialogue Centre. We learned about the architect of the building, Alfred Waugh, who was the first Indigenous graduate of SLAIS at UBC. He designed the charred wood exterior cladding, the interwoven cedar wall of the staircase, the salmon roe light fixtures and the glass waterfall that is collected from the copper roof of the building. The IRSHDC works with survivors and communities to access records and information about residential schools across Canada. There is an interactive wall with a timeline, map and node function that helps communities access the collection of materials and oral histories of Residential School Survivors. The Committee asked unions to connect with Indigenous centers at their universities, as in doing so we can foster new relationships. Committee members have enrolled in the Indigenous Canada Course through the University of Alberta.

Acknowledgements

The Committee thanks our Staff Advisor Micha Pesta, as well as our Communications Representatives Gregory Taylor. Committee members also extend thanks to the CUPE BC staff who assist with our Committee's work.

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Respectfully submitted:

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