

Sebastian Rodrigues
CEIU National Vice President – Human Rights
Spring 2021 Report
NE Meeting March, 17-20, 2021

A year has gone by, and we continue to face the many challenges of the coronavirus pandemic here in Canada and all over the world.

We continue to endure the difficulties and the impact that this pandemic has created for all our members, particularly within the Equity groups. However, the resilience in addressing many of our members' challenges by all our CEIU's National Union Representatives, staff, Local Executives and most importantly our National Executives, should be acknowledged. On a positive note, the pandemic has forced the employer to adjust as well, for example, allowing employees to work from home.

Graham Flack, the Deputy Minister, recognized that systemic bias is present in our organization, and acknowledged that tangible and sustainable solutions would be necessary to make a real difference.

While I have been addressing racism with the departments, there is still much work to be done. For example, during a recent BEAT (Black Employees Advancement Team) Design Jam, held in February 2021 at HRSDC, there was an unfortunate incident that took place. An anonymous person posted a horrible message on Slido, that violated the intent of the safe space that was created. That being said, it was commendable that the Deputy Minister quickly acknowledged the issue by sending an apology in an all-staff email directly following the incident.

Needless to say, this incident once again reignited a genuine concern within the Equity groups, specifically the black community. Work clearly still needs to be done, and we should refuel the passion that George Floyd's death sparked last year all over the world.

We acknowledge that the department is doing all it can to develop an inclusive workplace where our Black, radicalized and Indigenous members are treated with dignity and respect. To ensure that the department will address this incident, and furthermore to assure our members that appropriate action has been taken, I have sent an email to the employer, on March 03, 2121 requesting that the department shares the outcome of the investigation and what specific actions have been taken.

On that note, CEIU's NEVP Crystal Warner, has been encouraging the departments to engage separately on Equity issues, so that meaningful time can be spent on addressing the (Employment Equity) EE dashboard stats, and ensuring the EE Act is being followed. EE will continue to be a standing agenda item on the National Committees, with the departments.

As a result of questioning the EE dashboard stats, which from my perspective were difficult to follow, the employer requested to meet with us offline. At this special offline meeting, Crystal and myself were invited. The employer admitted that the dashboard is outdated and needs a revamp and fresh approach. We will be working with the employer on this initiative.

Crystal Warner-NEVP, Jessie Reis-Huggins (NUR – National Union Rep.) and myself were engaged in another offline discussion with HRSDC's management, regarding Equity issues. We touched on topics like:

- The level of Union inclusion
- Recruitment and development of black employees
- Address black and anti-racism efforts
- Engagement from our leadership
- Evidenced based on results
- Safe space for black employees
- Intersectionality
- Mandatory training in supporting EE development.

In the departments and in the regions, efforts are made to engage employees in addressing their Equity concerns. For instance:

- The creation of BEAT - Allowing the employees to have a safe space to discuss their issues and concerns. They are able to go deeper in addressing systemic challenges.

- Management is forced to get out of their comfort zone and put themselves in other people's shoes, if they want to feel the true pulse of the employees.
- Topics also include dealing with micro aggression and unconscious bias.
- Created an Unconscious bias committee to make recommendations to the appointment process.
- DTA (Duty to Accommodate Working Group) to address employees that have accessibility issues.
- ESDC's Inclusion survey Advisory Team: A survey to incorporate every employees' perspective. Fear of self-identifying by many employees. Employer admits that a deeper dive into the inclusion survey would be necessary.
- The Pride network group.
- The Visible Minority Network.
- The Indigenous recruitment and advancement team, engaged in a hiring campaign.

In our workplace we sometimes face challenges from a Human Rights perspective. Mental health, micro aggression, systemic discrimination and invisible disability have become part of our struggle to recognize our own capacity to function. When we struggle and suffer silently, we are slowly destroying ourselves. We must take courage to explore our options; there is no better way than self-identifying ([Please click this link.](#)), reaching out to the NVP for Human Rights, CEIU National HRRR committee for assistance, and by participating in Union Events.

Respectfully submitted.

In solidarity,

Sebastian Rodrigues

National Vice President Human Rights &

Chair National Human Rights/Race Relations Committee

The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. –Amelia Earhart