

CUPE BC Colleges Committee
Report to Convention – April 2018

The CUPE BC Colleges Committee is comprised of Local Presidents or designates from BC's college, institute and special-purpose university who are appointed by the CUPE BC Division Executive Board.

Part-time and precarious workers, access to post-secondary education, truth and reconciliation, international students, Public Private Partnerships and corporatization, shared services, sexualized and gender-based violence on campus and inadequate funding continue to be significant challenges facing post-secondary workers. As a sectoral committee, our challenges are on-going and resolutions are difficult to attain in the short-term; however, we continue to advocate for affordable and accessible public post-secondary education for this generation and future generations of workers and students. The committee hopes that the following representative stories from some of our institutions will illustrate the ongoing challenges in our sector.

Precarious Employment

Precarious employment is a discriminatory practice with negative consequences to the lives of workers and the quality of the educational system.

As government funding decreases to post-secondary education, soft funding for Post-Secondary education through International tuitions fees and corporate donations continue to increase post-secondary institutions dependence on precarious workers.

More of our members are relying on two or three jobs to pay bills and buy food for their families. We continue to push our employers for more regularization language and less pay-as-needed workers so that core appointments accurately reflect what they do and how many hours they work.

Precarious workers constantly check schedules in hopes of obtaining additional hours while trying to arrange time for their other jobs, or for child care, or elder care. Ongoing

temporary appointments and casual employment impedes a worker's ability to plan a future.

The Colleges Committee is dedicated to opposing the employers' continued reliance on precarious employment and we look to all CUPE members to support us in this opposition.

Access to Post-Secondary Education in BC

After 16 years of regressive Liberal policies, post-secondary education had moved beyond the reach of many British Columbians. Tuition rates rose to unprecedented levels, geographic accessibility had decreased dramatically, and basic literacy programs had been given a steep price-tag that those most in need of the programs were unable to afford. In short, the outlook for obtaining the skills, career and academic training necessary for improving individual's lives was bleak.

Thankfully, BC's colleges and special purpose universities have seen a dramatic shift in priorities under the new NDP-Green coalition government. In recent months, the Provincial Government has reinstated free admission into Adult Basic Education courses ensuring that British Columbians are able to complete their Dogwoods and upgrade skills for entering other post-secondary programs. The Ministry of Advanced Education has also implemented expanded funding to the tuition waiver programs for youth aging out of care under the Ministry of Children and Families.

In 2013, Vancouver Island University (VIU) began a pilot program that waived tuition and provided additional supports for books, supplies and housing for students who had grown up in the care system. As a special purpose university, VIU's mandate includes responding to the needs of its service areas. Residing in the mid-Island where many families live below the poverty line, VIU took on the challenges of youth aging out of care head on. At that time Vancouver Island had just over 900 youth in care under a continuing custody order, the majority of whom (63.8%) were Aboriginal, a percentage that had been on the rise for seven years. It had been well documented that youth leaving the government care system were less likely to have access to post-secondary education or training than young people who grew up with family supports. The

program, one of many VIU runs for non-traditional learners who face a variety of barriers, addressed these issues and proved highly successful with over 100 students taking part in between 2013 and 2017.

Soon 10 other BC post-secondary institutions began offering such waivers and, in September 2017, this amazing program expanded further with Premier Horgan's announcement that all of BC's public post-secondary institutions would now provide free tuition for young people leaving foster care. "We're in a position to make life better for young people who grew up without family stability," said Premier Horgan. "By bringing down barriers to opportunity, and making advanced education more accessible, we can clear the path to success for these young people."

Truth and Reconciliation

"Education got us into this mess and education will get us out." Senator Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations recognized that educational institutions have the ability to be a lynch pin in moving reconciliation forward within Canada. Colleges can play a key role in changing attitudes and need to be leaders in promoting connection with and understanding of Indigenous culture. Each of the institutions represented by the CUPE BC Colleges Committee has its own unique relationship with its local First Nations and, as a result, has created unique paths in moving towards reconciliation.

As an example, North Island College (NIC) services an area of 80,000 square kilometers on northern Vancouver Island and the BC coast (from Desolation Sound to Klemtu). The area encompasses numerous First Nations, including K'omoks, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuuchahnulth, and Heiltsuk, to name a few.

Overall, the proportion of Indigenous people as part of the NIC student body is in keeping with that of the general population in the College's service area. In some specific programs, Indigenous students are under-represented (e.g. Business Administration). Perhaps more significantly, it is recognized that First Nations are

inadequately represented within staff and faculty. Even so, the College is working to move forward on the path to reconciliation.

This past year at its main campus, NIC constructed an Aboriginal Lounge. Long overdue, this lounge offers a culturally safe space, and is a venue for Indigenous students to connect with each other. This is of utmost importance to Indigenous students, especially those that have come from small remote communities.

For many years now, NIC has one or more Elders in Residence, someone of their ancestry that First Nations students can reach out to for guidance. In conjunction with the construction of the Aboriginal Lounge, the office for the Elder in Residence was moved out of a shared space to a dedicated one. Given that the Elder often deals with serious issues – including domestic and sexual violence – a dedicated office is a significant step forward.

This past year, many managers at NIC took the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training, as a first step to being effective and respectful when interacting with Indigenous people. Efforts are underway to make this training available to CUPE support staff through the Career Development Fund. Members of the CUPE local executive are hoping to take a leadership role, by participating in the first session offered to support staff.

There is much more to do. Indigenous components need to be added to curriculum, to offer a First Nations perspective. When determining the educational needs of First Nations, the College needs to be cognizant not to adopt the harmful, paternalistic attitudes of the past. The College surroundings can include more Indigenous art and symbols, in recognition of the local First Nations culture. Perhaps in conjunction with the Aboriginal Lounge, a resource center for students and faculty could be established, to provide educational materials about Indigenous culture.

The time to educate our society out of the mess has started and the Colleges are working hard to answer the calls to action issued by the TRC.

Increasing Numbers of International Students

International students are a welcome addition and provide a positive multicultural experience for our post-secondary communities and all students and staff.

Unfortunately, continuous cuts to post-secondary funding under the BC Liberals made tuition from International students necessary to the survival of our institutions. In pursuit of revenue and through regressive Liberal Government mandates, some institutions have dramatically increased International student numbers to unmanageable levels and services to students and the quality of post-secondary education has decreased as a result.

This ballooning student population has also placed a strain on available employment, health care and social services in many small communities and increased the precarious employment at our institutions.

We would call upon the BC NDP Government to ensure that institutions are able to provide appropriate course offerings, quality education and services prior to accepting additional students. We would also call upon the Government to ensure that communities are able to absorb these additional students without placing additional stressors on housing, health care, and employment availability.

Public Private Partnerships and Corporatization in our Campuses

While the newly elected BC NDP Government may not be imposing Public Private Partnerships (P3's) on BC post-secondary institutions, Emily Carr University will have to carry the consequences of the BC Liberal Government initiatives for years to come. In the summer of 2017, Emily Carr University (CUPE 15) moved to their new P3 campus on East 1st Ave in Vancouver. While the building looks fancy and new, the process of building this P3 campus, and the increasing reliance on corporate donations to fund the construction, has resulted in fundamental changes to the way our staff and faculty work and the way our students learn.

The most staggering result of the Public Private Partnership deal brokered by the BC Liberals has been the layoff of our maintenance department. With this work contracted

out to a third-party company, we lost some of our most senior staff and specialized positions. The contracting-out of this important work has also infringed on the creative freedoms of student and faculty work who now face an onerous process with a third party when so much as putting a nail in a wall to exhibit artwork. At an art school, this is a real problem. The staff within the Facilities department have undergone health threatening amounts of stress as they deal with red tape and burdensome new processes with the advent of this third party uncooperative maintenance company. Ultimately the P3 agreement has resulted in layoffs, increased workload and stress for remaining staff and a decrease in the freedom of artistic expression for students and faculty.

The exercise of fundraising for the construction for the new Emily Carr University campus has also resulted in a throng of corporate naming; classrooms, lecture halls, outdoor spaces and even entire faculties within the university. This practice of naming the spaces and departments in our public institutions further reinforces that our post-secondary schools are being sold to corporate interests. The climate at the school is one of fear of reprisal for politically engaged work and speech. We have a fancy new building but what have we lost in the process? We need to continue to stress to the current government that we cannot rely on private donors to fund good quality public education. The Colleges Committee will continue to question and oppose the privatization of our public education system and work to educate our communities on the ineffectiveness of P3 projects. We need our public education system to be publicly funded.

Shared Services

Administrative Service Delivery Transformation Project is the formalized name for shared services in the post-secondary sector in BC. Shared services place the focus on cost saving outcomes and away from education. One area currently under review appears to be a centralized application process. We continue to demand transparency and monitor the transfer of work from one institution to another and privatization of our bargaining unit work.

BC Post Secondary Education Sexual Assault Policies

In 2016, the BC provincial government passed Bill 23 requiring our public PSE institutions to develop sexual violence policies. The initial private member's bill was based on similar legislation in Ontario (Bill 132) and creates a legal responsibility for institutions to both create and maintain policies to prevent occurrences of sexual violence, including educating, protecting and creating safe avenues for students reporting sexual assault. At the time, BC was only the second province to pass such legislation.

Our 28 public PSE institutions are at various development stages of these policies and it is clear that these policies must apply to all constituent groups rather than just students.

The College of the Rockies established a Sexual Violence and Misconduct Prevention Committee including CUPE, faculty, administrators and students. This Committee developed and efficiently implemented the policy and procedures, and worked with all stakeholders to develop and offer ongoing sexual violence and misconduct, disclosure, reporting and consent training.

This will be an ongoing program at the College of the Rockies.

College and Institutes Canada Conference

The 2017 Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICAN) conference (formally known as the ACCC - Association of Canadian Community Colleges) took place in Ottawa. This conference is of particular interest to the CUPE BC College Committee and the Chair and Co-Chair of the Colleges Committee attended representing CUPE BC. This annual conference includes colleges, and institutes from across Canada having representatives from Senior Management, Students, Faculty and BOG Rep in attendance.

Every year has a different theme and various workshops and the presenters can be from large and small or rural and urban colleges and institutes. The workshops are under the headings of Applied Research, International, Student Experience, Leadership and Governance.

Over the three days the information shared regarding best practice, trends and changes is invaluable, Of equal value are the networking opportunities. In the past, with the support of CUPE, we had a booth in the Marketplace which allowed opportunity to engage with conference attendees, including many Board members, about the union and openly answer questions that they may have in a positive environment. We are hopeful our booth request will be supported in the future.

Na'tsa'maht- Working Together as One is the theme for the 2018 conference which will be taking place at Camosun College in Victoria. This year's conference is from April 29 to May 1 with most of the events held at the Victoria Conference Center and Crystal Gardens and the Committee's Chair and Co-Chair will be in attendance once again.

The Colleges committee takes interest in the sponsors, exhibits and guest Speakers as there are organizations that would like to privatize areas of Colleges and Institutes-such as bookstores, cafeterias, registration, and facilities management to name a few. Our presence helps to neutralize the privateers as well it gives us an opportunity to talk about CUPE the union of choice for Public Education.

Our continuing thanks to CUPE BC for allowing our Chair and Co-Chair the opportunity to spread the CUPE word.

Engagement

Engaging our memberships and obtaining community support for CUPE members is an ongoing challenge facing the post-secondary sector. The Colleges Committee remains committed to fighting for gains in social and economic justice for our members by engaging and motivating our members through communication, education and bargaining.

Our Committee is committed to educating our membership, employers and the general public on the values of union principles and the benefits of union membership.

Our Committee members encourage you to join us in our fight for public post-secondary education by supporting our resolutions to ensure:

- the implementation of progressive changes to College and University Board structures and appointments
- safe, healthy work environments with secure employment, appropriate staffing levels and work load expectations.

Respectfully submitted:

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