

CUPE BC Indigenous Committee

Report to Convention – April 2018

Our first Indigenous Committee meet was at the (OBCM) One Big Committee Meeting in October 2017. The committee has 13 members that will be working hard at promoting and engaging members in their community and at their local. The Indigenous committee will be focusing on Truth and Reconciliation (TRC), resolutions, building resources and communications with members for the next two years.

The Indigenous meetings begin by the members participating in a smudging ceremony. *“Smudging is when a variety of medicine plants are burned and the smoke is used as a cleansing to remove negative feelings, emotions and energy. Smudging enables us to do our work with a clear mind and heart.”*

Debra Merrier, Diversity Vice President and Sister Shelley Saje Ricci attended the National Aboriginal Day on June 21, 2017 at Trout Lake, with around 1,000 people attending the celebrations. There was lots of entertainment, activities for the children, storytelling in a tee pee, face painting, and free food for the community. Thanks to CUPE BC for their donation toward the day’s events.

Debra Merrier attended the CUPE National Convention held in Toronto during October 2017. The National Aboriginal Council (NAC) continues to support the families of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). On October 4, 2017 the NAC held their Annual Families of Sisters Spirit Vigils ceremony at lunch time for the *Red Dress Campaign*. There were about 50 to 60 Red Dress that were brought outside by members of CUPE. Gloria Lepne was the Master of Ceremonies and Nathalie Claveau was Co-Master of Ceremonies in French. Elders were on site and smudging the people. Powerful events. Thanks to the CUPE National Aboriginal Council for organizing the events.

Debra Merrier and Brother Michael Lupo attended the first National All Committee Meeting on March 5 - 7, 2018 in Ottawa. There were 18 committees participating. A smudging ceremony was held each morning with Elder Thomas Louttit. Opening Plenary with National President Mark Hancock and closing remarks were given by the National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury. The NAC is working on these four areas: TRC, MMIWG, Stat Holiday June 21 and protect community controlled infrastructure included water and wastewater system and environment.

The Chair is setting up a couple of conference calls between meetings so the committee can continue communication. The Indigenous Committee will continue working with Trevor Davies, Paul Faoro and Dan Gawthrop with TRC, CUPE BC website and other ways of engaging with media.

Debra Merrier and Sister Dania Hansen-Hughes (Alternate Diversity Vice President) will be hosting a drummer and video on youtube of "*Show Me The Way*" from elementary students and "*Hide and Seek*" from secondary students. The Indigenous Committee will be working together with all four Diversity Committees at Convention on Equity Night. Sister Jeanette Burdeniuk has been working on Highway 16 routes between Prince George and Smithers.

Sister Dania Hansen-Hughes attended the Canadian Labour Congress Winter School: *I would personally like to thank our CUPE Education department for honouring me with such a high level Facilitators Training course and their commitment to Indigenous facilitators.*

The rest of the Indigenous Committee will be working on TRC, and gathering resources for our website. The committee has put four resolutions forward this year at the CUPE BC convention. I would like to thanks CUPE staff, Paul Faoro and Trevor Davies for all the support and time. Also thanks to the new Indigenous Committee members.

Respectfully submitted:

Debra Merrier, Chair
Shelley Saje Ricci, Co-Chair
Deea Bailey
Cynthia Bosdet
Jeanette Burdeniuk
Johnathan Dyer
Luke George
Lisa Gregory
Danica Hansen-Hughes
Haley Irwin
Michael Lupo
Liza McKay
Jeffery Stanley
Charmaine Surman
Dan Gawthrop – Staff Advisor
Mitch Guitard – Staff Advisor

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