

CUPE BC Library Committee

Report to Convention – April 2018

The CUPE BC Library Committee is a multi-sector committee representing CUPE library workers in four sectors; public libraries, K-12, colleges and universities. Our committee meets regularly to discuss the common issues facing all library workers across the province. At the October 2017 OBCM, the committee set the goals for the next term. We identified three main priorities - CUPE BC's ongoing relationship with the BC Library Association, member engagement and health and safety tool kits. What follows is a look-back on the accomplishments of the Library Committee during the last year of its 2017-2019 term.

BC Library Association (BCLA) Conference Participation and the Relationship with BCLA

Following our 2016 workshop presentation on advocacy for library services, the CUPE BC Library Committee will once again present at the annual BCLA Conference - this time focusing on the people who deliver those services. Our workshop is called "Library Workers: Natural Champions of Democracy!" Library workers are inherent champions for democracy, equity, diversity, access to information and literacy. What skills do library workers bring when they volunteer in their communities? How do skills developed in their unions help in their library work? How does the emergence of precarious work impact the ability of library workers to participate in their communities? What impact would staffless libraries have on our patrons, professions and services? How can we strengthen the understanding in our communities about the value of library workers as natural champions for democracy?

Our panel of CUPE members will address these questions and more as we learn about their experiences as advocates for their community organizations. The short panel discussion will be followed up by an interactive dialogue by session participants to find out what interesting work our colleagues do in their communities as well as what we can do to advocate for things we value most.

Word Vancouver - September 25, 2017

CUPE Local 391 celebrated literacy, libraries and library workers at WORD Vancouver, Western Canada's largest celebration of literacy and reading in 2017. WORD is held at Library Square in Vancouver every September, and CUPE Local 391 is a long time sponsor and participant. This year the Local was extremely proud to welcome two of their own members at the CUPE 391 stage (aka the CUPE BC Trailer!) who read from their published books; Danielle LaFrance from her most recent book of poetry, "Friendly Fire", and Chalene Knight, from her book "Braided Skin". Rosie the Reader was also present among other CUPE 391 volunteers to promote the great work our unionized members do everyday. Thanks to the Library Committee for some great handouts! Save the date for this year's WORD on September 30th!

October is Library Month! Who are the people in your library?

Last October we were able to feature 100+ library workers and allies for Canadian Library Month. Library workers from all sectors talked about their jobs and their roles at work. They lit up talking about intellectual freedom, access to information, workplace democracy, literacy and the communities they serve. It took off on social media and soon people who were library users wanted to join the campaign. CUPE members, CUPE staff, and labour leaders from a variety of unions in BC showed us their library cards and shared why and how the library was important to them and their families. All it took was a little tenacity and an iPhone and a campaign was born!

Political Action

Our committee plans to work with the Municipal and the Political Action Committee to mobilize library workers to get involved in the 2018 local government elections.

Health and Safety for Library Workers

Health and safety continues to be top of mind for library workers in all sectors. The committee plans to dig deeper into a variety of issues that face our members - compassion fatigue, precarity, mental health, violence in the workplace, and the opioid crisis to name a few.

The committee would like to thank Staff Advisor Tom O’Leary, Communication Representative Kathryn Davies and Researcher Sarah St. John for their support and ongoing dedication to our sector.

Respectfully submitted:

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April 2018

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