

CUPE BC Women's Committee
Report to Convention – April 2018

Over the next two years, the CUPE BC Women's Committee is committed to creating space for women in leadership and creating opportunities for succession planning for those looking to become leaders in our union. Our goal is to bring education to the committee and our locals in an effort to engage and empower those who identify as women who we work with and support.

The CUPE BC Women's committee met at the OBCM, October 19th, 2017, for our 2017-2019 term. We also met earlier this year at our new CUPE BC office on February 21st, 2018. Within these meetings, we identified action plans, made recommendations and resolutions, hosted guest speakers and identified some key events and dates for locals to participate in their communities. Since our first meeting, we also created a Facebook page to share resources and stay connected, which has been a fantastic way to achieve solidarity as a committee. The following is a report of activities that have taken place since the April 2017 CUPE BC Convention.

Women's Marches

This past January 20th, 2018 women and allies from around the globe organized to mobilize in marches in response to the overwhelming number of issues brought forward in the last year since the first Women's March in 2017. By January of this year, the #metoo movement gained serious traction and catapulted the world toward a new dialogue surrounding sexual violence and consent.

December 6th - Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women

December 6th is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada. Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, this day marks the Anniversary of the murders in 1989 of 14 young women at l'Ecole Polytechnique de Montreal. They died because they were women. As well as commemorating the 14 young women whose lives ended in an act of gender-based violence that shocked the nation, December 6th represents an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on the phenomenon of violence against women in our society. It is also an opportunity to consider the women and girls for whom violence is a daily reality, and to remember those who have died as a result of gender-based violence. Finally, it is a day on which

communities can consider concrete actions to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and all gender-based groups.

March 8th - International Women's Day

International Women's Day, this past March 8th, was a day to celebrate the achievements of women and the fight for gender equality around the world. CUPE National's slogan for IWD 2018 was "Not One Step Back" and many members stepped forward, together, across our province in various ways to join the global celebration of women's collective freedoms. CUPE is committed to building all women's economic, social, political and cultural power and to building just futures, free from all forms of violence and is committed to futures filled with stores of collective liberation.

CUPE BC Women's Committee members attended a range of celebrations including the Surrey International Women's Day Lunch, hosted by CUPE Metro, The United Way's Wine and Cheese Event in Kamloops, the Prince George International Women's Day Breakfast and we even reached as far as the International Zabataita Women's Gathering in Mexico. The committee has also circulated an informative and chronological history of International Women's Day provided by the United Nations.

Sister and member of CUPE BC's Women's Committee, Patricia Skalozub, reflected on her attendance at her local Women's Day event in Kamloops, sponsored by The United Way, which was a networking social featuring RBC Olympian Anastasia Bucsis:

"Anastasia was a phenomenal speaker. She spoke of her trials and tribulations of being a woman struggling with being gay, feeling unaccepted by her fellow team mates and family. Once she told her story, her family was beyond supportive and her mother's words to her were 'we are here to love not judge.' This is amazing advice that can be carried through all aspects of each and every one of our lives. Also, at this event, the Kamloops United Way released their new program called Empower Her, which is a program to support women in the community to develop the life skills necessary to remain in stable housing, have a positive relationship with money and achieve their independent financial goals."

CUPE National Women's Committee

All Committees for CUPE National met in Ottawa from March 5-7, 2018 to discuss priorities for their respective committees for the next two years. Chair of CUPE BC Women's Committee, Amber Leonard, represented CUPE BC on the national committee. This group of women met as a group for the first time and instantly began to bond over common barriers that we as women face. There was difficult dialogue but the resiliency of all the women in the room really became the comradery that was all felt instantly.

The priorities of the committee mirror many issues we face here in BC and the committee is ready to tackle and empower all women to challenging these barriers.

Racial profiling is often thought of as how the police perceive people, which is now not only entrenched in the media, but also at the workplace and in the community. This is a barrier to all equity seeking groups, men and women.

Violence is so entrenched in our society that it has become the norm. The CUPE National Women's Committee will be resourcing ways of informing women on how to break the cycle of domestic violence and where to find help. They will also be dialing in on Sexual Violence and how to combat and empower women to defend themselves from attacks of violence, reporting and how to find a safe haven when needed.

The third priority as a committee is creating space for leadership opportunities for women within their community, their local, our union and beyond.

The CUPE National Women's Committee will meet as a group again the first week of October, so they can attend Sisters in Spirit Vigils in our Nation's Capital on October 4th, 2018.

Capacity Building and Training

The 2017-2019 CUPE BC Women's Committee continues its commitment to liaison with other bodies, since women's issues span a variety of ethnic, cultural, economic and political boundaries. Sisters Amber Leonard and Kelly Dussin represent our committee within the BC FED Women's Committee. The BC Fed Women's Committee held a meeting this past March to tie in with Women's Day to lobby for all hospitals to keep

evidence in sexual assault cases, encourage involvement of women in underrepresented sectors and to rally for more funding for women in trades.

As a committee, we have mutually expressed interest in working in coalition with the Indigenous Committee at future meetings, including a recommendation to have our committee participate in an Indigenous Blanket exercise. Truth and Reconciliation remain an important topic that we will further discuss as a committee at future meetings, as well as involvement in the October 4th Sisters in Spirit Vigils to remember murdered and missing Indigenous women.

We have also taken on many issues surrounding precarious work in our province to support CUPE BC's Precarious Workers Working Group since the overwhelming majority of precarious workers identify as women.

During our February meeting, we hosted CUPE National Human Rights Representative and staff advisor to CUPE BC's Pink Triangle Committee, Cheryl Colborne who shared with us a wealth of resources and information including negotiating domestic violence leave in bargaining language and provincial documents to help support individuals who experience gender-based violence. We were also informed of the Rainbow Refugee Society, a small handful of very powerful women who have developed a program to bring support, solidarity, housing and sustainable long-term funding to refugees who are LGBTTTQI or HIV positive.

During our term, the Women's Committee plans to continue its focus on capacity building by pairing a "Women Breaking Barriers Workshop" with a committee meeting this coming Fall. Chair of the CUPE BC Women's Committee, Amber Leonard, along with GVPs Tanya Patterson and Michele Waite, will attend the 37th Western Regional Summer Institute for Union Women July 10th-14th at UC Berkley.

As union women, we support other union women in different industries and have recommended a financial sponsorship that supports a group of female filmmakers producing a short film. CUPE BC's Women's Committee has also come together to support the release of Crystal Andrus Morrissette's book, *Simply Woman*, a powerful depiction of 30 union women in different fields. The book features our very own CUPE sisters Shireen Clark, local 374, and Seriani Howell, local 606. Keep an eye out at convention to win a copy of this book.

Lastly, as past Women's Committees have done, we will encourage toiletry donation at all meetings and Conventions to donate to local women in need.

Resolutions at Convention

Our resolutions at convention this year span a variety of topics, but mostly surround pay equity, precarious work, and raising awareness on gender-based violence. Furthermore, we have submitted resolutions to encourage the Provincial Government to inject funds into imperative Legal Aid and Family Law services that were dramatically cut during the BC Liberal rule. Please support our resolutions to convention and support the vital changes needed to raise women up and create gender equality in all realms of life.

Respectfully submitted:

Amber Leonard, Chair
Patricia Skalozub, Co-Chair
Nicole Randell, Recording Secretary
Julie Roberts
Kathy Boyce
Debra Cowan
Daniela Escolar
Marcey Gibson Campbell
Shana Kirkland
Akeena Legall
Kalinda Naismith
Ann Purvis
Laurie White
Kelly Dussin - Staff Advisor
Janet Szliske - Communications Representative

April 2018

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