

Code of Conduct [Ratified by members July 25, 2020]

1. The VTU Community

The Vancouver Tenants Union (VTU) welcomes all people, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, age, religion or nationality. The diversity of who we are makes the union and our movement stronger.

The following code of conduct applies in our community at all times, including but not limited to, VTU building meetings, door knocking, general meetings, working group meetings, communications on digital platforms, and social events:

- Please be kind and respectful with each other. People have differences of opinion, and we need to respect that. Direct strong emotions at ideas, not individuals.
- Discussion and debate is encouraged and are part of how we develop our organization and improve our work. Be respectful, use healthy forms of discourse, and be open to new ideas.
- We want our discussions to be accessible to all - so please be ready to 'break it down' if someone needs an idea or word explained.
- While healthy debate is essential to progress, disruption is counterproductive and harmful. It's also harmful to co-opt the organization to divert resources and attention away from the objectives and principles of the VTU.

2. Harassing behaviour is not welcome in the VTU.

For example:

- Violence and/or threats of violence directed against another person.
- Sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist or otherwise discriminatory jokes and language.
- Personal insults, particularly those related to gender, sexual orientation, race, age, religion, or ability.
- Sharing or displaying sexually explicit or violent material without consent
- Sharing or threatening to share other people's personally identifying information without their consent ("outing" or "doxing").
- Inappropriate physical contact.
- Unwelcome sexual attention. This includes, sexualized comments or jokes; inappropriate touching, groping, and unwelcome sexual advances.
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking or following (online or in person).
- Any behaviour which one knew, or reasonably ought to have known, would cause a person to feel humiliated or demeaned.

- Sustained and/or repeated disruption of VTU events, including membership meetings and presentations for external organizations.
- Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behaviour.
- In addition to the above, any online spamming, trolling and/or flaming is not welcome.

3. How to raise concerns

Whether you are a regular volunteer or brand new to the organization, we want the VTU to be a safe place for you.

Any VTU member or participant who believes they have been harassed or discriminated against should talk with the person they believe has perpetrated harm (the respondent), if it is possible and safe to do so. The intention of this discussion is to draw attention to the violation of the policy so their behaviour changes.

If the person doesn't feel safe to talk directly with the respondent, or if a direct discussion doesn't resolve the issue, please let a person in a leadership role in the event or activity know so we can support you and work together to decide next steps.

4. A person who violates the policy may be

- a. Asked to stop their offending behaviour
- b. Told to leave a VTU event or activity
- c. Asked to take a break from attending VTU events or activities
- d. Removed from the VTU facebook page / blocked on twitter/ we will no longer respond to emails.
- e. Removed from volunteer roles
- f. Removed from membership

5. Organizing with integrity

- Tenant organizers, advocates working group leaders, and coordinators have a unique role in the lives of those we work with. We are often organizing with and supporting people who are in a vulnerable time of their lives, facing evictions, landlord harassment, dangerous living conditions and unsafe and stressful circumstances.
- We are often at people's doorstep to share information and it's not uncommon for organizers to be invited into people's homes.
- The people we organize are often low income and are disproportionately women, racialized people, indigenous people, queer and trans people, and often hold many of these identities at once.
- For all these reasons, there can be power imbalances between tenants and VTU organizers.
- It is important that organizers act with respect and integrity at all times when representing the organization.
- Organizers should not exploit these imbalances for any sort of personal gain. Organizers are at all times bound by the VTU Code of conduct, when conducting activities related to the VTU.

- We want the people we organize with to be safe. That means we follow pandemic protocols and prioritize safety for tenants and organizers.

Some further resources:

- Bellingham Tenant Union Code of Conduct
<https://bellinghamtenantsunion.org/code-of-conduct>
- Worksafe guide on harassment and bullying
<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/hazards-exposures/bullying-harassment>
- FAQ BC human rights code <http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/law-library/faqs/human-rights.htm>