



PAS DE VICTOIRE  
*SANS LUTTE!*  
*NO STRUGGLE,*  
NO VICTORY!

MAY 13-17 MAI  
TORONTO ONTARIO

REPORT OF THE  
**NATIONAL  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMITTEE**

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CANADIAN UNION OF POSTAL WORKERS  
SYNDICAT DES TRAVAILLEURS ET TRAVAILLEUSES DES POSTES



# NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

## Report to 2019 Convention

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The mandate of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) is to study, report and make recommendations on CUPW's human rights work. The Committee is made up of four working groups, representing workers of colour, differently-abled workers, those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and Indigenous people. Each group works throughout the four years after Convention to improve the human rights conditions of the membership by making recommendations to the National Executive Board and developing material to help the membership with human rights issues. During our present mandate, we presented over 75 recommendations, many were adopted and have been completed or are in the process of being acted upon.

The Committee is made up of one regional representative for each working group, plus all members holding national and regional elected positions or union representatives who self-identify as belonging to one or more groups.

The National Human Rights Committee is concerned with how people from equity-seeking groups participate in union activities; how workplace practices affect members who belong to such groups; and it proposes solutions to unfair work and management practices. The NHRC works on delivering education to the membership on equality issues and on how to fight the oppression of workers of colour and Indigenous workers, those of different ability and LGBTQ workers.

The NHRC meets twice a year with our four (4) equity-seeking groups to make our working environments better for all, to continue to exert pressure on governments to work toward securing equity for all and to spread the message around the world that it is not a crime to be who you were born to be. The meetings are a space where members of equity-seeking groups in our Union can come together in all our diversity to share with each other our stories and our struggles.

At the mandate's end, the committee is pleased to report that it has accomplished a number of activities and events:

## Guest Speakers and Training

Mike Palecek, National President attended a meeting of the committee. He thanked the members for putting their names forward to sit on the NHRC and thanked the committee for the work they had done. He reminded the committee there were many issues around equity that have to be acknowledged and moved forward in order for the Union to progress.

Dr. Monia Mazigh did a presentation on Islamophobia. She is the National Coordinator of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group.

Viviana Carol Medina and Mostafa Henaway did a presentation about the work of the Immigrant Workers Centre (Montreal). The Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC) defends the rights of immigrants in their places of work and fights for dignity, respect and justice. The IWC mobilizes around workplaces issues (including workplace accidents, harassment, unpaid wages, and so forth).

Nancy Parker from the Ottawa Committee for Pension Security, made a presentation on pension plans and Bill C-27.

Terri-Lee Rayvals-Mele from the Public Service Alliance of Canada did an introduction to intersectionality. Intersectionality is a sociological theory describing multiple threats of discrimination when an individual's identities overlap in a number of ways, such as a combination of race, gender, age, ethnicity, health and other characteristics that do not fit the norm.

Frank and Anne Dreaver of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee provided a history of the more than 35 years of work that their committee has been doing to fight for truth, justice, and freedom for Leonard Peltier. Leonard Peltier is a Native American activist who has been unjustly incarcerated in the United States for forty years.

CUPW's childcare coordinator gave a brief history and update of the Childcare Fund projects. After, members were able to host kitchen table discussion in their locals. This is a way for members to talk about their personal experiences with both public and private childcare centers.

Susan Nosov of CLC's Education and Labour College director spoke about credible university education and the options for affiliations between workers and the CLC.

Communication specialists from National office attended the meetings and explained how the NHRC and their department work together. They spoke about using social media, Perspective, radio, newspapers and other resources available to reach out to allies and transmit information. There was also an interactive piece on how to do messaging and create sound bites.

Brother Imad Temiza from the Palestinian Postal Service Workers' Union spoke about fighting for the basic human rights for Palestinian postal workers.

## **Silent Auction**

Silent auctions are held without an auctioneer. Members place their bids on paper for a specific time, and can outbid each other as they make their way around the table of various articles. Members bring in items from their regions, some that are homemade, or that are typical cultural items. The money raised from the auctions that were held over the mandate, were donated to various organizations across the country.

## **Section 7.59 Funding**

The committee used the accumulated funds to help committee members, alternates, and local members to attend the two of the Canadian Labour Congress conferences Rise Up! and Young Workers Summit. CUPW members were facilitators for the workshops, participated in demos and lead direct actions. The conferences enabled workers to participate in workshops and presentations that included:

- Sharing organizing strategies that build and grow an inclusive movement;
- Develop and strengthen skills for political and membership engagement for organizing and mobilization;
- Develop a deeper understanding of priority human rights issues that strengthen the labour movement

Members also used the funds to attend multi union meetings, training sessions and Federation of labour conventions.

## **Calendar**

The NHRC designed a calendar for 2019. This important awareness tool presents many campaigns that the Canadian Union of Postal Workers supports. It features important events, struggles for human rights and highlights the posters that have been created this mandate.

## **Regional Work**

When members return from the national meeting, they continue the work of the committee in their locals and communities. Below are examples of this work:

They facilitated and participated in three and five-day educationals including Turtle Island, Social Stewards, Human Rights and Mental Health courses;

They attended regional conferences putting forward resolutions and helped with implementing the new election process that were held at the conferences.;

They became representatives on the Constitution and General Policy committees;

They organized a delegation to the Wendake reserve of the Huron-Wendat Nation in Quebec;

They helped organize and participated in Pride, and Labour Day parades, as well as Vigils for MMIWG;

They ran and were elected to positions on Federations of labour, CLC committees, Regional and local positions and labour councils;

They took part in Delivering Community Power activities;

They participated on negotiation committees;

They participated in strikes, occupations, days of actions, and rallies;

They represented CUPW at government lobbies, meetings and presentations and;

They were members of international delegations.

## **Reports from the Working Groups**

### ***Differently Abled Working Group***

Our group undertook a number of activities during the last mandate. These revolved around providing information to the membership about human rights, and finding ways to protect people who have suffered workplace injuries.

Our group focused on sending information to the membership to remind them of the necessity of providing accommodation for deaf and hearing-impaired members. We also incited locals to stay in touch with workers who are absent from the work floor due to short- and long-term disability. In addition, we have a working committee that is gathering statistics on Article 54 and WCB in Québec with the purpose of using the information to protect those who have suffered workplace injuries. Currently, we are developing a brochure/flowchart to help the membership navigate the Short-term Disability process.

We have also chosen a symbol to raise awareness about differently abled workers. The lavender ribbon is our designated symbol. It is intended to be a visual symbol of awareness of our committee's efforts to raise awareness of the inequities with which we are faced across the country.

We have also put forward a number of recommendations: that locals pressure CPC to designate gender-neutral washroom facilities in post offices; that a bulletin be sent to all locals to inform the membership about family status struggles; that all locals be provided a list of the necessary documents in relation to filing grievances that concern human rights.

Lastly, the Committee has passed resolutions that address environmental issues, pension legislation and freedom of the press rights, which affect our members as a whole.

Many of our members face discrimination based on a lack of knowledge or respect for the challenges they may face in their daily lives.

It is our duty to assist members in education and awareness in order to break the barriers that discrimination imposes. As such, we identified four (4) key dates to promote throughout the year with the hope that the entire membership would embrace these important dates within their region and locals:

***May 1 to 7, 2018***

- The Canadian Mental Health Association's 66th Annual Mental Health Week

***October 10, 2018***

- World Mental Health Day

***October 15 to 21, 2018***

- Invisible Disabilities Week

***December 3, 2018***

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The Differently Abled Working Group of the NHRC is dedicated to addressing any inequity within our membership. We are committed to improving the lives of our members and their families.

## **Indigenous Working Group**

This year, the Indigenous working group has been busy. For National Indigenous Peoples' Day, we created a poster with the help of the mother of one of our Committee members. We have devoted energies to securing food for our northern communities. In addition, we continue to work on pressuring the Canada Post Corporation to meeting hiring percentages of Indigenous people.

We are very happy to report that we have promoted the Turtle Island course in all regions and continue to persuade around the necessity to deliver this course. It is gratifying to know that we are contributing to educating members about our past and the history of our peoples.

During the last mandate, we continued to support the Free Leonard Peltier Campaign, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), FNMI peoples and Idle No More.

We continue to raise awareness regarding the damage caused by residential schools and all the inequality issues faced by first nation communities and people.

## **LGBTQ Working Group**

In 2016, we promoted gender-neutral washrooms for the local offices across the country with proper signage stating "gender neutral" for non-binary people, as it was to become the 12th protected ground under the Human Rights Act in 2017.

One of our most recent resolutions was to change our forms to represent gender equity by having a third box on the form other than just male or female, so everyone has the opportunity to self-identify.

Along with the NHRC and CUPW, we also produced a letter to encourage municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments and our allies within the labour movement to help find a way to support and develop Gay/Straight Alliances in schools across the country as not all schools are a "safe place" and not all LGBTQ youth are supported in their own homes.

Since the Trump election there has been a rise in bigotry in the US and around the world. As a result, this hatred is being delivered to homes in the form of deliverable ad mail. We have asked the NEB to disseminate a bulletin about workers' rights reminding the Employer and the Union that bigotry and hate speech are unacceptable in the workplace.

In 2017, we designed, printed and distributed across the country, an anti-bullying poster for our members, to help our members in regards to physical, mental and emotional abuse.

We were also instrumental in encouraging Locals to join in on Pride festivities (including Pride parades) to show their support of the LGBTQ community and to support people who had to leave their own country for a better life and for acceptance. We also designed a PRIDE t-shirt which was worn by members across the country during 2018 parades. This contributed in showing what a diverse group belongs to the LGBTQ community and their allies.

We have a lot of bullying and harassment going on within Canada Post between management and workers, and among co-workers. Social Stewards (if there are any within that local) are overburdened and not always available to deal with harassment issues. Management really does not do much to help. We are working on getting Shop Stewards some training to assist with the bullying issues. Unfortunately, some of us have had personal dealings with this.

Some of the ongoing issues on which the LGBTQ working group is working include finding ways to help other countries understand that being LGBTQ should not be viewed as a crime punishable by prison or death. There are also resolutions that we are bringing forth to the convention because particular issues need to be addressed since they currently affect our members.

In conclusion, the LGBTQ working group continues to work on ongoing issues of discrimination, harassment and bullying. We still have a long way to go, but hoping in the future all of our hard work pays off, for better working conditions within Canada Post, across the country and the world.

## **Workers of Colour (WOC) Working Group**

For this mandate, the members that constitute the workers of colour working group have seen their involvement put to contribution for the purpose of the emancipation of workers of color within CUPW and throughout our society.

Following the essence of section 7.59 of our constitution, many members of the workers of color working group were able to participate and contribute to different events that focused on social justice, against oppression such as anti-black racism, islamophobia, discrimination against the Sikh, racism towards south Asians, and others. Some of the work we have done includes:

**Asian heritage month** – In the month of May we celebrate Asian and South Asian heritage month. The committee has done bulletins and posters to commemorate the influence that Asian and South Asian cultures have had on art, culture, economic and other aspect of our society. Some of our members are also members of the Asian Canadian Alliance. The Alliance promotes and support Asian Canadian activists in leadership roles within the Labour movement and within their communities.

**Coalition of Black Trade Unionist (CBTU)** - It is the fiercely independent voice of black workers within the trade union movement, challenging organized labour to be more relevant to the needs and aspirations of Black workers. During this mandate, members of the working group have participated in CBTU conventions, general membership and regional meetings. CUPW members elevated the discussions and facilitated workshops about Black workers issue and proposed solutions in the quest for social justice. Some of our members sit on the CBTU executive board.

**Recognition and remembrance**—In is wisdom, Dr. Martin Luther King once said that “... *in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.*” It is in this spirit that the WOC working group has put forward bulletins, posters and different articles to make sure that our friends and allies recognize, accept and remember the struggles that our ancestors have lived through, and that our children still face today.

**Black history Month** – During the month of February, we celebrate the many achievements and contributions of Black Canadians. We also remember historical events and places that reminds us that our diversity and heritage contributed to shape what Canada is today. From 2015 to 2019, we honored Judge Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré for her many accomplishments and as an inspirational model for young black women who dedicate their lives to the pursuit of justice for racialized communities.

We remembered the home of so many black settlers, escaping slavery via the Underground Railroad. Africville in Halifax is today declared an historical site and a symbol of anti-racism and is an inspiration to Black people across the country. We focused our reminiscences on a once vibrant black community in Vancouver: Hogan’s Alley. It was home to many racialized communities and a cradle for many famous Black artists and athletes. And we brought back memories of the Shiloh People. The original Black settlers of Amber Valley in Alberta. A forgotten thriving Black community of free slave that took their destiny into their own hand and helped build the province’s ranching industry.

In February 2013, we created a poster in honour Albert Jack. To this day, it is one of our most popular posters. We have also participated in family reunions, the play by Appledore Productions named “The Postman”, focused on the importance of door to door delivery. Also, the students at Victoria Public school did a letter writing campaign that helped with Albert Jackson being commemorated by a stamp in January 2019.

**Tamil heritage month** –After the House of Commons in 2016 finally recognized the contribution of Tamil to the Canadian society by declaring January, Tamil Heritage month. The working group designed a beautiful poster that portrayed the richness of Tamil culture and heritage.

**Advocacy and activism**—The WOC group brought inspiration, courage and devotion to many of its members. It spark a light within that often emerges in the form of commitment to the community. It can take the form of volunteering for a community organization, organizing and planning an event that puts forward racialized people, canvassing for racialized candidates during a municipal election, and other actions.

Events such as the **Carifesta** in Montreal where thousands of people learn about Caribbean culture and can watch in delight the multitude of warm colors marching in the streets of Montreal. The **Black community youth forum** in Montreal was another occasion where members of the WOC group participated actively to help create the first event of its kind in the city of Montreal. Other members offered their canvassing skills to racialized municipal, provincial and federal election candidates, such as Saron Gebrellassi, Knia Singh, Felicia Samuels, Charline Grant and many more.

### **Creating change**

The WOC working group believes that a true activist has to “be the change you want to see”.

And there is no better place for exemplary action than CUPW where you put energy in the struggle. Therefore, the WOC proposed numerous recommendations to the National Human Rights Committee. These recommendations aim to educate our CUPW allies in how to better understand our issues, encourage the membership to support us by walking alongside us, accept us as equals in leadership roles and create a culture of inclusivity within CUPW as a whole. The recommendations became resolutions on the National Executive Board.

## **Conclusion**

Whether you are a CUPW leader, an activist or a rank and file member, we need your help to make sure that all members understand that the work of the committee forms a foundation within the union. To go further, CUPW’s commitment to equality must go beyond the work of the committee.

Life need not be a competition. We are powerful when we work together using all our unique forces and differences to improve our workplaces and lives. Stand together for justice. Support one another to create better days ahead. We must create a union where everyone sees themselves.

In solidarity,

National Human Rights Committee