

## CUPE 2950 Report Template:

Member Name: Mahnoor Lone Date: April 29, 2024 Event Day # 3

Event: Equity and Human Rights Resolutions: 19 and 20

Session: afternoon

Topic or Issue: Violence against Indigenous Persons in BC and Canadian Responsibility to Follow Through on Truth and Reconciliation Report

Facilitator(s): CUPE BC Indigenous Committee

**Q1.** What are the main points and concerns for the topic or issue?

The Indigenous Committee put forward two critical resolutions arguing for CUPE BC to take concrete actions to address the harm and risks faced by our Indigenous workers-in-arms historically and currently in British Columbia.

- A) Resolution 18 called for CUPE BC to lobby the provincial government to push towards the creation of a formal “Red Dress Alert System” in BC. The call for such a system comes in response to the horrific rates of violence and disappearance that indigenous women, youth, and 2SLGBTIA+ people are facing in BC.
- Several speakers reiterated that this issue concerns all of us: “This is not an indigenous problem, it is a Canadian problem”
  - between 2009-21, 1 in 6 indigenous people have gone missing. Indigenous women and two spirit people are disproportionately affected with indigenous women being 12 times more likely to go missing than any other demographic. Missing women are often found murdered near roads and highways.
  - Children and women of indigeneity are 7 times more likely to be killed
  - 17% of homicides that involve our indigenous sisters happen on streets, highways, roads. Compared to 1% for non-indigenous people.
  - Despite this alarming situation there is no proper system in place to look for missing indigenous women. The police often respond dismissively to indigenous people reporting missing family members and this systemic racism delays attempts to find them. CUPE members shared experiences of being told that their missing relative “must be out drinking” and other forms of systemic racism they face while searching for missing relatives.
  - Alternatively, family members are forced to depend on social media posts which cannot reach everywhere and do not accomplish much.
  - As a member said: “We need more action not just words. The red dress alert is just a start. They go missing and we don’t hear anything, they are our families. We need a system that we can have these pictures up not just on social media because not everyone is on Social Media. We need ally ship from everyone, this cannot just be placed on the shoulders of indigenous people. We need solidarity from you, not just online but in person as well.”
  - Given these facts a dedicated system such as a Red Dress Alert is a crucial first step to tackle the targeted violence and racism facing our indigenous siblings. Ontario and Manitoba are already working on planning these and BC should follow suit.
- B) Resolution 19 called for CUPE BC to gain familiarity with the calls to action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation commission in 2015.
- The TRC report was released a decade ago, yet no concrete action has been taken to date

- A significant call to action within this document was for governments to “provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations
- This means UBC has a responsibility to educate its workers (us) about all these subjects. UBC has also re-affirmed this in theory through their Indigenous Strategic Plan. However practical initiatives to educate workers about the history of residential schools and other aspects of indigenous history remain limited.

**Q2.** Why is this topic or issue important for my local union, CUPE 2950 and/or workplace at UBC?

- UBC is built on indigenous land and has expressed its commitment to Truth and Reconciliation in multiple statements and policy documents
- As workers, our daily work, our existence, our livelihood is all dependent on indigenous land. Our cognizance of this fact must go further than lip service by learning more about this history and by facing head on how indigenous peoples are disadvantaged, marginalized and killed around us.
- Our fellow indigenous unionists have explicitly asked for our solidarity and called on us to help carry the burden they have been bearing alone for two centuries.
- one member said: “We need more action not just words...We need ally ship from everyone, this cannot just be placed on the shoulders of indigenous people...Those people are our families...What would you do if you were turned around and told you wouldn’t be helped. What would you do if you were met in response with systemic racism instead of help?”
- Another speaker said: “I want you to be curious and I want you to stand with us. Look at the 94 calls to action. Pick up a book, look at the pictures, watch a show. I encourage you to do that work and stand beside us. Only by doing this work will we understand how colonialism and residential schools harm our people even today.”
- As an organized union at a privileged university in a major city we have a voice and visibility that many other locals do not. We can use this to demonstrate useful solidarity in ways that upholds the values expressed in our equality statement.

**Q3.** How can I apply these learned applications, resources, tools or knowledge at CUPE 2950 and/or my workplace?

- Reading a page of the TRC Calls to Action Document and reflecting on it in each General Membership Meeting: [caid.ca/TRCFinCal2015.pdf](http://caid.ca/TRCFinCal2015.pdf)
- We can circulate digital copies to members and request physical copies for those who may need them. To ensure sustainability we could request the xwi7xwa library to order these, and then members may borrow copies from there if needed.
- Creating a working group amongst union members to draft bargaining recommendations that can work TRC into collective agreement. These may include the university’s responsibility to educate workers on the topics included in TRC Call to action #57

- We could also lobby for mandatory training and educational opportunities to be created by the university for workers. We can also lobby for additional funds/and or time off for members attempting to work learn about and work on truth and reconciliation
- Creating more space within our union for unstructured dialogue and discussion as well as member education on the systematic discrimination faced by indigenous people within our workplaces and society
- Learning how to read North American Phonetic Alphabet so we can actually read indigenous building names on UBC campus
- Using resources developed at UBC to teach our members , e.g:  
<https://www2.moa.ubc.ca/musqueamteachingkit/about.php>
- Reaching out to the CUPE BC Indigenous committee: Debra Merrier and Taily Wills to find out about existing initiatives we can join

**Q4A.** Are these learned resources, tools or applications and knowledge helpful to your workplace at UBC and CUPE 2950? Yes / No

**Q4B.** If yes, how does it hypothetically change if implemented in your workplace at UBC and CUPE 2950?

- Implementing these changes can make our union a more welcoming space for indigenous workers
- These actions can help us contribute towards building a more equitable university that has actually followed through on TRC recommendations

**Q5.** Knowledge paving it forward: What tips and other helpful knowledge can you provide to your fellow CUPE 2950 members?

Some helpful links and resources:

- A long form [article](#) series on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in BC, by Brandi Morin
- [UBC's Indigenous Strategic Plan](#)
- [All reports](#) from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:
- Residential school survivors' [testimonies](#)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action [Document](#)
- CUPE Truth and Reconciliation Bargaining [Guide](#)
- A useful [web page](#) about the hə́ŋqəmińə́m language
- A useful [resource](#) to learn the North American Phonetic Alphabet adapted for the hə́ŋqəmińə́m language

