

**I acknowledge and respect the ləkʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.**

During the week of Wednesday 26th- Saturday 30th 2023 CUPE BC had its annual convention. I was very lucky to have the pleasure to attend this event along with other members from the CUPE local 917. Everyday we started with a land acknowledgment of the lands similar to that stated above. They also provided us with the opportunity to meet with Elder George to discuss any hardships we wanted to let go of as well as the cleansing ceremony in which Elder George would provide his healing methods.

### **Wednesday**

The first day was mainly just announcements from the CUPE BC president and treasurer, CUPE national president, and many other speakers to briefly share their stories and beliefs. We learned the surface level of many different committees within CUPE such as the four equity committees: Pink Triangle, Indigenous Workers committee, Persons with disabilities, and Racialized Workers committee.

They also shared the equity statement, explained how the week was going to work, as well as gave us the opportunity to meet everyone before a week of convention.

### **Thursday**

They shared the stories of the CUPE workers who are currently on strike for the past two months from First Transit as well as introduced the story about the 55,000 workers who fought for fair work and pay in Ontario against Doug Ford.

The first half of the day was mainly them talking at us and explaining their reports and money numbers, budget, etc.

During the second half of the day we settled a few resolutions that included topics surrounding Indigenous Day, paid leave for miscarriages or stillbirths, etc., help with affordable housing for CUPE members, employers to encourage human rights (still obviously passed with consensus), and drag show library story times.

The drag show library time created a lot of controversy on the floor and many people were against this motion but all in all it still passed through (carried). This was the day in which many human rights and equity resolutions were discussed and carried. One major resolution was No. 36 stating that *CUPE BC will encourage employers of CUPE members across the province to support our members by meeting their responsibilities to uphold*

*human rights for their employees.* Obviously all were in support of this, but still many people spoke on the resolution to share their own stories. People should be able to be themselves in their workplace as well as feel comfortable around an employer in all capacity without the risk of harm, violence, or harassment. One speaker said something that stood out to me and she said... an employer cannot consider themselves inclusive just because they choose to hire for example a trans person or a person of colour. This inclusivity is done from attitude and from continuous inclusion without harassment or bullying within the workplace. I spoke on the “pro” mic for resolution No. 76 that states that *CUPE BC will raise awareness regarding the intersectionality of equity issues by providing them time and space.* I stood in front of everyone and explained how important this resolution is to many people. As someone who is a young woman and someone who is queer I find it important that we are given the time and place and also the allowance of raising the awareness of equity issues. This also touches on workers who are part of any of the other equity committees, and the Womens and Gender Rights Committee, and the Young Workers Committee. It was definitely difficult to stand in front of a room that large and share my own story but as I said to the room I am proud of who I love and I'll never stop loving who I love just because some people deem it as “wrong”.

## **Friday**

We were extremely lucky to have an indigenous tribe come in and allow us to enjoy their wonderful singing and dancing. They also explained to us their past stories. This was so wonderful to watch and really brightened the room with culture.

This day began with the mayor of Victoria speaking to the room! Also at the beginning of the day, a speaker discussed the many international issues such as unfair pay, dangerous working conditions, and also how many CUPE activists risk their lives around the globe. She made a huge point to state that “it's not charity, it's solidarity”.

This was also Workers' Day of Mourning, on this day we remember all those who have lost their lives, suffered injury or illness due to the workplace. Every local went up to the mic and shared names of people who have passed since last year's convention due to their workplace. After this, all delegates at the convention rallied in front of the legislature to make our presence known. During this we all held signs and flags to show our support for these workers and union.

We were also very lucky to have Jagmeet Singh from the NDP speak to us at the convention. We heard his life story and how he grew up. He also explained his future goals for Canadians. One big thing that stood out to me was his plan to include dental care in health care. Obviously this would help millions of Canadians and help support those in need.

The resolutions today varied in topics and ranged from anti-privatization, to work safe to police action, etc. One very emotional topic of resolution was resolution No. 38, which stated that *CUPE will lobby the federal government to immediately ban the practice of incarcerating children and adults seeking asylum in Canada.* Hearing many stories of how people's children got taken away from them when they migrated to Canada to be thrown in jail, potentially with criminals was very cruel and disheartening. Many of these people are also forgotten about and become extremely traumatized after already running away from their own traumatized country.

One thing brought forward was the fact that CUPE has many scholarship programs that only two unions in BC used this year, and especially for UVic students this could be very valuable knowledge to know that this is available for you! This money is set aside for the scholarship and many years go unused because no one realizes we have it.

CUPE BC works with many allies to provide support to those in need, and to help lift others. These include but aren't limited to: living wages, accessible health care, summer reading programs. As well as community events, pride, and truth and reconciliation.

All in all, I learned so much through this experience and I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend this convention.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the Saturday (last day) of the convention but it was the best convention CUPE BC has had, we passed more resolutions than any year before! YAY US.

- Sage Mayhew CUPE 917