



BC FERRY & MARINE WORKERS' UNION

2018 CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

April 10 – 12, 2018

Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, Vancouver, BC

Human Rights Committee Report to Convention 2018

Our Committee currently has three members, Chair Katie Techen, SOC Representative Al Zittlau, and Rick Meyers. We lost our Deas Representative a few years into our term.

We had our first meeting and outlined issues within our Union that we felt were the top priorities:

- Changing the culture within our workplaces to be more tolerant of equity seeking groups.
- Changing the culture within our Union to have more diversified representation.
- Educating members on Women's issues.
- Educating members on Accommodation and Mental Health in the Workplace.
- Supporting and promoting LGBTQ+2 events and creating a work environment where everyone feels safe.
- Working to get Bullying and Harassment issues into OHS meetings and various Safety Committees.

We recognized early on that we have an issue within our workplaces and our Union that not everyone feels represented or included. We sought to empower workers of equity-seeking groups with education and tools to find their voice and to support people who felt disengaged with the Union. We sent members to the Summer Institute for Union Women, and Women in Leadership at CLC Winter School. These classes, we believe, have given some women the confidence and passion to take a more active role within the Union. We have more women in leadership roles in different Locals than when this term started. We would like to thank the Provincial Executive for their support in these initiatives, and for approving these opportunities.

We held our first ever Women's Conference this year. We had a very interesting panel of women activists from our Union, our first female President, Sister Shirley Mathieson;

our Labour Relations Officer, Sister Lynda Ruhl; and Sister Lynn Morin, an active Shop Steward and safety advocate. It was interesting to hear these women's stories, what they dealt with within our Union, and how and if our culture has changed. The work they did to make our workplaces better for female members is invaluable, and very much appreciated.

Over the two days, the participants took a Women in Leadership seminar, traded ideas and stories, and vowed to make our workplaces better for everyone. Thank you to Brother Brian Lalli for being an advocate and ally for this Conference, and for recognizing that these gatherings of ideas are invaluable, and thank you Graeme Johnston for your moving introduction, and recognition that we have a lot of work to do.

We supported and promoted Pride season. We were lucky to have the President of Nanaimo Pride on our Committee, Brother Rick Meyers, so it allowed us to have a table at the Pride Festival in Nanaimo. Together with Local 2 volunteers, our booth was highly visible, and we were able to show our solidarity with the local LGBTQ+2 community. There is a lot of work to do in this area.

Sister Katie Techen was fortunate enough to attend along with the First Nations Vision Committee, a wonderful two day course on how to work with and include Indigenous People in the workplace. It was eye opening, and it was a pleasure to meet the First Nations Vision Committee as there are many common goals both groups have.

We celebrated Day of the Seafarer by collecting toiletries, socks and touques, to be dispersed to seafarers that are stranded on the ships waiting to come into port. One of our members, Brother Mel Pascua, is active with Lighthouse Ministries, and we thank him for taking the donations that were generously given.

An area that we did not give enough attention to was Accommodation in the Workplace and people with disabilities. Brother Zittlau is a champion of this cause, and worked very hard to bring this issue to the attention of the Company and Union. It is the work of the LRO's, but we needed to communicate to the membership that there are options, and they have rights. Thank you Brother Zittlau for your work in this area.

Workplace bullying and harassment are still huge issues. We believe that it has been brought up at various Safety Committee meetings throughout the fleet, but it is not taken seriously as a safety issue. With the new regulations being brought in by Transport Canada, there is an increase of incidents from the public, where workers feel their safety is at risk. If the Company doesn't start taking it seriously as a safety issue, someone will get hurt. While not entirely under the Human Rights Committee's mandate, if people are not safe at work it becomes everyone's concern.

There is a lot of work to do. We need to make the language of inclusion the norm within our Union. Equity seeking groups, safe spaces, creating space, being an ally, all these concepts are becoming more mainstream and we need to get on board. We hope this work can be expanded in the future, and that we continue to be progressive. Thank you for the support we have had over the last three years, and we hope we have made an impact and made our workplaces a better place for all.

In solidarity,

Sister Katie Techen
Chair, Human Rights Committee