

Sparked by the leadership of racialized members, delegates at the 2018 convention directed CUPE Ontario to develop an anti-racism plan to address the systemic underrepresentation and exclusion of racialized and Indigenous members in our union. Members did so understanding the connection between anti-racism work and our commitment to fight back against austerity, the rise of hate in our society, the resurgence of the political right, and the increasing threats to public services and public-sector jobs in our communities. Racism and exclusion divides workers. Working class solidarity is necessary to resist and build power to achieve the collective goals of our union. There will be no economic justice without racial justice.

To achieve the goal of racial equity within our union, the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan (AROAP) subcommittee, composed of officers and staff and assisted by external facilitators, has developed a draft plan. The plan outlines a process to begin identifying and understanding how racism operates within our union. The action items outline our strategies to remove systemic barriers for racialized and Indigenous members, specifically as these barriers are perpetuated, normalized, and legitimized through the union's organizational culture, policies, programs and practices.

More specifically, the subcommittee addressed the problem of the underrepresentation of racialized and Indigenous members in union participation at different levels and within all sectors. This racial disparity has been documented in various surveys of membership.

To develop the plan, the subcommittee participated in meetings and workshops where they reviewed internal documents and learned about CUPE Ontario members' lived experiences to help identify systemic racism within the organization and develop a framework of analysis and action. The framework serves as a guide to assist the subcommittee of the CUPE Ontario Executive Board in developing, implementing, and evaluating the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan.

The Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan subcommittee recognizes that this draft report is only the beginning and recommends that ongoing work continue to ensure the sustainability of the anti-racism work outlined here, and that the committee's recommendations for action serve as building blocks to challenge racism work within our union.

The Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan subcommittee also acknowledges multiple forms of racism and other forms of oppression, and the ways in which these forms of oppression intersect. We recognize the additional struggles faced by Black, racialized and Indigenous people who are women and gender diverse, LGBTQI2S+, who have disabilities, who are young workers or retired members, or who have identities shaped by class and power imbalances. The subcommittee encourages leaders and members of CUPE in Ontario to consider using this plan as a template to address other inequities that weaken our solidarity and ability to use our collective strength for the common good of our union and the broader society.

# Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan



## MISSION STATEMENT

- 1** We recognize that racism exists in CUPE in Ontario as it does in all parts of our society. Racism is not always visible, because it has been ingrained in our culture, and in our union.
- 2** The purpose of this Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan is to create and maintain a process over time to root out racism; to identify where CUPE in Ontario has practices, policies, and ways of engaging that create barriers to participation for racialized workers. We will provide tools for CUPE leaders, locals and members as part of this work.
- 3** The process involves identifying, challenging and reducing these systemic barriers as well as individual acts of racism. By doing this work, we will change CUPE in Ontario for the better. It will strengthen our union, fortify our solidarity, and increase our union's power and capacity to fight back against austerity and to fight forward to demand a better Ontario.

## PREAMBLE

### SCOPE OF WORK OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

- 4** At the 2018 convention, members directed CUPE Ontario to develop an anti-racism plan to address the systemic underrepresentation and exclusion of racialized and Indigenous members in our union.
- 5** Members did so understanding the connection between anti-racism work and our commitment to fight back against austerity, the rise of hate in our society, the resurgence of the political right, and the increasing threats to public services and public sector jobs in our communities.
- 6** Racism and exclusion divide workers. Working class solidarity is necessary to resist and build power to achieve the collective goals of our union. There will be no economic justice without racial justice.

**7**

To achieve the goal of racial equity within our union, the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan (AROAP) subcommittee, composed of officers and staff, members of the Executive Board and assisted by external facilitators, has developed a draft plan. The plan outlines a clear process of identifying and understanding how racism operates within our union. The action items outline our strategies to remove systemic barriers for racialized and Indigenous members, specifically as these barriers are perpetuated, normalized, and legitimized through the union's organizational culture, policies, programs and practices.

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More specifically, the subcommittee addressed the problem of the underrepresentation of racialized and Indigenous members in union leadership at different levels and within all sectors. This racial disparity has been documented in various surveys of membership.

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To develop the plan, the subcommittee participated in meetings and workshops where they reviewed internal documents and learned about CUPE Ontario members' lived experiences to help identify systemic racism within the organization and develop a framework of analysis and action. The framework serves as a guide to assist the subcommittee of the CUPE Ontario Executive Board in developing, implementing, and evaluating the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan.

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The Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan subcommittee recognizes that this draft report is only the beginning and recommends that ongoing work continues to ensure the sustainability of the anti-racism work outlined here, and that the committee's recommendations for action serve as building blocks to continue anti-racism work aimed at creating more equity within our union.

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The Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan subcommittee also acknowledges other forms of oppression, and the ways in which these forms of oppression intersect. We recognize the additional struggles faced by racialized and Indigenous people who are women and gender nonbinary, LGBTQI2S+, who have disabilities, who are young workers or retired members, or who have identities shaped by class and power imbalances.

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The subcommittee encourages leaders and members of CUPE in Ontario to consider using this plan as a template to address other inequities that weaken our solidarity and ability to use our collective strength for the common good of our union and the broader society.

## METHODOLOGY

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### THE SUBCOMMITTEE USED THE FOLLOWING METHODOLOGY, WHICH GUIDES A DELIBERATE AND PLANNED PROCESS OF CREATING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE:

**ASSESS:** ☐ Identify and name systemic barriers

**AIM:** ☐ Select priority areas for action: which organizational area has an opening for change?  
☐ Is it strategic for the union's growth and its members' solidarity?  
☐ Organizational base of support is present  
☐ Chance of success is high

**ACTION:** ☐ Act to remove barriers and create building blocks for equity through positive measures

**AUDIT:** ☐ Use key elements to measure process and results

## PRIORITIES

- 14** In developing initial priorities for action, the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan subcommittee brainstormed to identify all the potential areas within which we believed we could make change.
- 15** These priorities were ranked based on what was within CUPE Ontario's purview, and could therefore be dealt with in a timely way. We have retained the list with the other priorities, which will be considered while work on the three priorities in this plan progress.
- 16** The Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan is a living document, which will be revisited by the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan subcommittee regularly to track progress and develop new priorities.
- 17** The draft plan outlined here only sets the foundation so that we can continue to make our spaces more representative and inclusive. We know, for instance, that bargaining is a place where we can make gains, and that a document exists that outlines gains made to advance equality in bargaining.
- 18** Though bargaining is not listed here, CUPE Ontario will continue to advocate to update and share this information to advance equality in the workplace.



**PRIORITY ONE**

**INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF RACIALIZED AND INDIGENOUS MEMBERS, WITH A FOCUS ON RACIALIZED AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN, AT CUPE ONTARIO CONVENTION, AND IN CONFERENCES, SCHOOLS, AND LEADERSHIP MEETINGS**

**ASSESS:**

- 19** Racialized and Indigenous members do not see themselves represented at all levels of CUPE in Ontario.
- 20** If members do not feel welcomed in our union, they may instead take their activism to communities, and our union could miss their valuable activist and leadership contributions.
- 21** Only some of the committees of CUPE Ontario have created designated seats for equality-seekers to ensure racialized and Indigenous members are reflected in the leadership of all parts of CUPE Ontario.
- 22** Where there are designated seats, there is a perception they are “token seats.” Consequently, these seats may not be valued by some, and lead to those holding the seats feeling marginalized.
- 23** There are locals and sectors with a high density of racialized and Indigenous workers who have little access to necessary resources and/or participation in the union.

**AIM:**

- 24** The changing demographics of CUPE in Ontario create an opportunity to make the cultural changes necessary to eliminate systemic racism. It also creates an opening to pressure and support leadership to enact the action items identified throughout the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan.
- 25** This is a process that must unfold across the province, including in rural and northern areas.
- 26** Leaders, executive, staff and members will be able to make the link between the marginalization of racialized and Indigenous members and how it can lead to apathy and disengagement from the union and the electoral process.
- 27** This work is critical to membership outreach and engagement, including through the Stronger Together campaign.
- 28** The serious pursuit of anti-racism work is essential to organizing new members into CUPE that reflect the changing demographics of our workforce and our communities.

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## ACTION:

CUPE Ontario officers, the Executive Board, and staff will take a strong, active role to support the goal of representative participation of racialized and Indigenous members at conventions, conferences, schools and leadership meetings by taking the following actions:

- 1) Provide plain-language tools for CUPE Ontario sectors, committees, and locals including, but not limited to: a checklist to identify systemic barriers, strategies to eliminate systemic barriers, evaluation questions using equity principles, and an equity impact analysis tool.
- 2) Support the Racial Justice Committee, working with the Aboriginal Council, in their ongoing work to increase the participation of racialized and Indigenous women at all events. This involves using existing membership survey data to identify precarious job classifications and sectors with high percentages of racialized and Indigenous members. It also addresses how to use the above tools to provide other necessary resources to eliminate the systemic barriers that they face.
- 3) Work with each sector to organize focus groups with those racialized and Indigenous members who are already engaged to learn what worked to help them get more active in CUPE Ontario and in their locals, what barriers they faced, and how these barriers were overcome.

## AUDIT:

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The CUPE Ontario Executive Board and assigned staff will track the demographic representation of members attending CUPE Ontario events.

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Demographic data collected will be reviewed, analyzed, and shared to continue working towards eliminating systemic barriers to full participation of racialized and Indigenous members.

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Data collected from events will be reported at the CUPE Ontario Convention under a new section of the report card covering the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan to monitor progress and outline required action.



**PRIORITY TWO****EDUCATION****ASSESS:**

- 33** Racialized and Indigenous members have historically been underrepresented in educational programs, especially educational programs targeted to local leaders.
- 34** Locals often give priority to current executive members to participate in educational programs and schools, which exacerbates the underrepresentation of racialized and Indigenous members we see in other areas of the union.
- 35** Many educational workshops divide equality-focused courses from leadership-focused workshops. Anti-racism content is not integrated into all workshops.
- 36** Leadership Executive Training at Fall and Spring Schools fill up quickly, and there are currently no mechanisms to ensure that there is representation from racialized and Indigenous members.
- 37** There are few opportunities for racialized and Indigenous members, including women, to connect and build capacity together.

**AIM:**

- 38** A Local Executive Training course with registration open to racialized and Indigenous members will ensure that a more representative group of our membership get leadership training. The group will then also be able to connect with other racialized and Indigenous leaders.
- 39** Leadership training for racialized and Indigenous members will help develop the capacity of members who can then move into leadership positions within their locals.
- 40** A leadership training program for racialized and Indigenous women would create opportunities for development, and by encouraging these leaders to mentor other racialized and Indigenous women, we will build leadership capacity amongst an underrepresented group of members.

**AUDIT:**

- 41** CUPE District Councils who deliver this training will track data to report to the CUPE Ontario Executive, CUPE Council Presidents' Meetings, and local leadership.

**42** Track the progression of participants in leadership training for racialized and Indigenous women after they finish the program. Continued check in with participants to provide resources to support them in their leadership pursuits and their mentorship roles.

**43** Using demographic data, track the information about who is coming to CUPE Ontario events, including schools, conferences, and conventions. Regular report-backs to track progress will be shared with the Racial Justice Committee, Aboriginal Committee and the Executive Board to monitor progress and recommend further action.

**44**

## **ACTION:**

- 1) CUPE Ontario officers and assigned staff will work with District CUPE Councils to promote Local Executive Training (30 hours) for racialized and Indigenous members. District CUPE Councils are ideal as they will help to build regional networks, and meetings will be more accessible to populations outside Toronto.**
- 2) CUPE Ontario's Education Committee will offer an additional Local Executive Training course with designated seats to promote the increased participation of racialized and Indigenous members at Spring School and Fall School. CUPE Ontario will promote this opportunity at Convention and at events throughout the year.**
- 3) Lobby CUPE National to create and fund a leadership training program for racialized and Indigenous women. This training program would be modeled after a past Women Breaking Barriers leadership training. This training will equip participants to be able to support and mentor other racialized and Indigenous women in their communities.**
- 4) Encourage CUPE National to ensure that all education facilitators are educated about the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan. Facilitators would be provided with an introductory piece that can be included at the beginning of each workshop they lead discussing the importance and purpose of demographic data collection, and encouraging members attending workshops to fill out the information. We will also encourage CUPE National to provide ongoing anti-racism training to facilitators.**
- 5) Work with CUPE National and Union Education to ensure that all workshops incorporate anti-racism principles into their training. Continue to present Stronger Together at conferences and to locals, tying the work of membership engagement and increased member capacity to anti-racism goals.**

**PRIORITY THREE****REVIEW OF CUPE ONTARIO POLICIES****ASSESS:**

- 45** Our policies do not focus on issues of equity, nor do they generally take into account representation on committees and in other decision-making bodies. Racialized and Indigenous members have historically been underrepresented in educational programs, especially educational programs targeted to local leaders.

**AIM:**

- 46** This process gives us the tools to review the policy manual through an anti-racism lens.

**AUDIT:**

- 47** A biannual review of the CUPE Ontario Policy Manual.

**“Institutionalized rejection of difference is an absolute necessity in a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people.”**

**-Audre Lorde**

## **ACTION:**

- 1) A biannual review of the Policy Manual will be conducted by the Policy Committee.
- 2) Book-off language should be amended to specifically address equal opportunities for racialized and Indigenous members.
- 3) Committee structures outlined in policy should consider an equity lens.
- 4) More inclusive language can be considered for precarious and part-time members.
- 5) An equity lens in labour-management should be adopted. This would be reflected both in the composition of the labour-management committee in addition to supporting a proposal of more extensive employment equity language.
- 6) Support the inclusion of a policy that outlines considerations for speakers at CUPE Ontario events, including representation from racialized and Indigenous people, and considering a policy about speaker compensation.