



PSAC Okanagan Human Rights Committee April 18th, 2020 Minutes

Present - Kelly Megyesi CEIU 20972, Linda Woods UNE 20140, Maria-Luiza Romano AGR 20027, Justin Lee AGR 20027, Nadia Sokal AGR 20043, Lorelei Sterling UVAE 20035, Jeanne Olineck CEIU 20914, Dawn Bassett AGR 20043, Jenny Anderson CEIU 20914, Carolyn McGillivray CIU 20045. Guests: Jamey Mills PSAC BC REVP, Robert Strang PSAC Rep, and Shelley Saje Ricci Guest Speaker.

Regrets: Karen Sutton (CIU 20045)

Welcome - Hello & welcome to our Human Rights meeting. Thank you for giving of your time to join.

Minutes - Previous minutes (Feb 2020) minutes reviewed and accepted. m/LW, s/JL - all in favour

Financial - Treasurer report as at April 15, 2020
Last reported Feb 27, 2020 – Opening balance 613.73
Spending (89.36) Reimbursement Meal
Receipts 1000.00 PSAC annual contribution
Closing balance as of April 15, 2020 \$1524.37

(Possible reimbursement of delegate fee. Outstanding CLC convention \$100 & Wet'suwet'en \$100

m/KM, s/ML – CM abstained – all others in favour.

Projects - Kelly and Maria-Luiza spent time on a COVID mask & cap initiative as well as knitting for the hospital. Motion to reimburse Maria-Luiza for materials used \$100.00 m/JO s/LW – all in favour. Kits of instructions, patterns available for members to complete in their area. Carolyn was interested and Maria-Luiza will liaise. Motion to make funding available of up to \$100 for supplies should projects proceed. m/KM, s/ML – all in favour. Motion to reimburse Kelly for sewing supplies of \$21.18 – m/ML s/JO – all in favour.



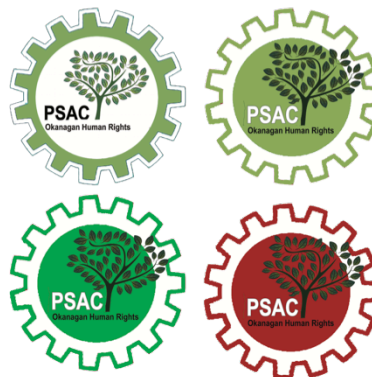
Standing in Solidarity - Guest Speaker Shelley Saje Ricci joined our call and provided the group with reconciliation information and steps our committee could take. See attached report.. Specifically she suggested 5 steps;

- i) Territorial Acknowledgement on the Agenda before the Welcome,
- ii) Territorial Acknowledgements on email signatures,
- iii) Use native-land.ca,
- iv) Learn the true history of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/video/reconciliation.html>
- v) Wet'su'weten Toolkit <https://unistoten.camp/supportertoolkit2020/>

Kelly will send the Wet'su'weten donation and complete the pledge of support on behalf of our group.



Button/Stickers – Decision on design to be done by email due to lack of meeting time. Motion to purchase vinyl stickers to be used for swag/ projects up to \$60. m/KM, s/LS – all in favour.



Terms of Reference – Terms of reference were written in 2011 by Maria-Luiza but the committee has been unable to find the original document. With the newest information on quorum – Kelly undertook rebuilding them. All minutes on file within psacbc were reviewed and membership/quorum at all previous meetings were noted.

Due to time constraints – the document will be finalized at the next meeting. Members are asked to review (already sent) and email Kelly with suggestions.

COVID and Human Rights – acknowledged that this is affecting all, including migrant workers. Robert continues to keep us in touch with RAMA. Kelly contacted RAMA and offered our support.

Round table – postponed to next meeting

Next meeting – Saturday June 13, 2020 10am
Location to be determined

Meaning of Reconciliation and the importance of standing in solidarity: April 18, 2020 CEIU Human Rights Committee Mtg.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission definition. Truth and Reconciliation Commission. A temporary body established and officially sanctioned to investigate and report on patterns of human rights abuses occurring over a period of time in a particular country or in relation to a particular conflict.

- Started in 2008 with PM Stephen Harper's apology
- Creating the TRC – 6 years collecting statements of truth

1. 2015 – 94 Calls to Action

<https://next150.indianhorse.ca/challenges/94-calls-to-action> (21 Challenges)

<https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform-single/beyond-94?&cta=1>

2. 45 Articles UNDRIP https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

3. MMIWG Report <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

4. 232 Recommendations for DTES <http://dewc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MMIW-Report-Final-March-10-WEB.pdf>

"Reconciliation means that you had a good relationship to begin with and then you're reconciling the relationship, in particular with the Canadian government," she said. "But the relationship has never been good," **Sandlane Gid** said from her home in Haida Gwaii.

"The reconciliation process is important for all Canadians because it's about the basics of how we treat each other as fellow human beings and the kind of relationships and communities we want to build for the future. As Reconciliation Canada Ambassador **Chief Dr. Robert Joseph** says, "Our future, and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today."

Justice Murray Sinclair is the Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. With his colleagues, he has heard testimony by hundreds of Indian Residential School survivors and reviewed countless records of the schools. Though he is dedicated to a better and less conflicted future for Aboriginal people and Canada as a nation, he identifies here the need for ongoing work and commitment—commitment in which the whole country must share.

<http://irsi.aboriginal.ubc.ca/2013/09/11/what-is-reconciliation-justice-sinclairs-view/>

Reconciliation is about atonement. It's about making amends. It's about apology. It's about recognizing responsibility. It's about accounting for what has gone on. But ultimately, it's about commitment to maintaining that mutually respectful relationship throughout, recognizing that, even when you establish it, there will be challenges to it.

From the perspective of survivors, wanting Canada, the people of Canada, to acknowledge the wrong, to atone for it and to amend their ways, I think it's fair to say that they're probably quite pleased with the reaction to the TRC's report, hopeful that in fact things will change, but we're still too early in that change process to be able to say it's going to happen.

For public servants, what's important is to understand, when the government makes a commitment like they have done to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or to establishing a Nation-to-Nation relationship... Understanding what that means and what that means to government policy, government actions and government programs is very key.

There are a number of things that **public servants** need to be aware of in order for us to have a better relationship. We need to be aware of the fact that a lot of the social problems that young people are presenting to the Canadian justice system, to the child welfare system and to Canadian society generally are

that that's part of the equation of discussion that they're going to encounter when it comes to Indigenous people, talking to them, dealing with them. In particular, the young Indigenous population today will still trot out the history of residential schools as a basis for claiming that more needs to be done.

<https://www.csp-s-efpc.gc.ca/video/ssontr-eng.aspx>

Suggestions:

1. Add in Territorial Acknowledgement on the Agenda before the Welcome
2. Add in Territorial Acknowledgements on email signatures
3. Use native-land.ca to find whose traditional territory you're on... use native-land.ca
<https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/okanagan/>
 - a. Syilx/Okanagan Nation Alliance's Website
 - b. Okanagan Indian Band'
 - c. Upper Nicola Band
 - d. Westbank First Nation
 - e. Penticton Indian Band
 - f. Osoyoos Indian Band
 - g. Lower Similkameen Indian Bands
 - h. Colville Confederated Tribes
 - i. Upper Similkameen Indian Bands (wikipedia)
4. Learn the true history of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/video/reconciliation.html>
5. Wet'su'weten Toolkit <https://unistoten.camp/supportertoolkit2020/> For DONATIONS

Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19 - March 24, 2020

<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-and-covid-19> clicking on this link will take you to the Indigenous Corporate Training Blog where there are many more articles by Bob Joseph

We are in uncharted waters these days as countries around the world scramble to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are all at risk and all have a role in helping minimize the spread of this virus, some are at heightened risk, due to age, underlying health, geographic locations, or a combination of all those factors. Indigenous Peoples are vulnerable to pandemics, and have been ever since European contact. Infectious diseases have had devastating impacts on Indigenous communities. The influx of Europeans introduced pathogens that Indigenous Peoples had never been exposed to therefore their systems lacked the biological defences necessary to withstand the introduced viruses. In other words, they lacked the natural immunity of the Europeans. Not only did they lack natural immunity but their traditional medicines were unable to fend off the infections. Smallpox, influenza, measles, and whooping cough all caused significant loss of life. "As the original pre-contact population is not agreed on, it is difficult to accurately measure the population losses suffered by First Nations during this period. It is clear that in some cases entire villages were significantly reduced in single disease events, with mortality rates ranging from 50% to 90% of the population. Population loss of 90% from pre-contact to 1890 based on recent (still conservative) pre-contact population estimates is generally accepted. The pattern of introduced disease decimating the population, associated with colonization, is one found throughout the Western hemisphere." [1] Smallpox, arguably the most devastating, first occurred in the 1770s and then recurred in 1781-82. Deaths were in such high numbers traditional burial protocols were abandoned. For a period mass graves were dug but at the height of the epidemic, bodies were left where they took their last breath. The arrival of Europeans not only introduced deadly infectious diseases but eventually led to the complete disruption of the traditional lives of Indigenous Peoples. The assimilation policies of the federal government enforced via the Indian Act, removed them from their traditional lands and onto reserves, moved them into inadequate and cramped Euro-style housing, severely disrupted their traditional lives, cultures, social norms and values; and, restricted their ability to hunt, trap and gather medicinal plants, which forced them to switch European style food.

The assimilation policies actually were counterproductive as they segregated and created the "otherness" of Indigenous Peoples. By enforcing isolation, restriction of movement, separate schools and other

assimilated them. It was not until the 1951 revision of the Indian Act that Indigenous Peoples (status Indians) were considered “people”. Prior to 1951, the Indian Act defined a “person” as “an individual other than an Indian.” In order to be considered as a “person”, they had to give up their Indian status (enfranchisement). Once they became “people” they assumed all the rights other Canadians enjoyed, including health care. But, as it also meant that they gave up associated legal rights, benefits, and restrictions of being a status Indian. The objective of enfranchisement was ultimately to undermine the collective worldview of the people and promote the adoption of a European worldview of individual rights. As enfranchisement had the potential to lead to the dismemberment of land and culture few status Indians chose to take the carrot of “equal” rights.

The health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples suffered dramatically. The massive upheaval in all aspects of the traditional lifestyles and cultural practices that had sustained them for millennia transformed formerly healthy, self-sustaining and self-governing nations to existing as dependent wards of the state. Restricted access to hunting grounds, loss of habitat for food sources, pollution of fish-bearing waterways are all factors that have impacted food security for Indigenous Peoples and pushed them to increasingly rely on store-bought foods. An example is during the 1950s and 1960s the federal government carried out a campaign to slaughter the Inuit dog to force Inuit off the land and into homes and within federal programs. The Inuit contended for decades that this slaughter harmed the Inuit’s identity and sought acknowledgement of harm to their culture.

Lack of employment opportunities and the associated increase in rates of poverty and the high cost of shipping food to isolated communities resulted in diets in some communities that are nowhere close to the recommendations of Canada’s Food Guide.

And then there is the on-reserve housing situation. The number of housing units on most reserves does not match the demand which leads to dangerously high overcrowding situations. The housing units in many reserves were poorly constructed without moisture barriers and below standard ventilation rates leading to an increased presence of mould.

Additionally, there is the historical and ongoing issue of safe drinking water. Many reserves do not have safe drinking water. Generations of residents have never known what it is to drink tap water or pour a bath. Broken and faulty sewage treatment facilities are also an issue on many reserves.

The health impacts of the above are compounded by the lack of readily available health care. Remote and isolated communities are desperately in need of health care providers, units, and supplies. There are 96 remote fly-in Indigenous communities across Canada.

So, when you combine loss of culture, poverty, higher incidence of underlying health issues, crowded and unhealthy living conditions, lack of clean water, faulty sewage systems and limited access to health care you can see why Indigenous Peoples living on reserves are highly vulnerable to epidemics and pandemics. The conditions in which people grow, live, work, and age have a powerful influence on health. Inequalities in these conditions lead to inequalities in health. [2]

Self-isolation during a pandemic is simply not possible in a great many on-reserve homes. Nor is frequent washing of hands.

When the H1N1 pandemic hit Canada in 2009, Indigenous Peoples were disproportionately affected: “In Canada, over 8,500 cases were hospitalized, 16.8% of which required intensive care. A particularly concerning occurrence was the spread of H1N1 2009 into First Nations communities in Canada. Although Aboriginal peoples constitute only 3.8% of Canada's population, members of the First Nations were 6.5 times more likely to be admitted to an ICU with pH1N1 2009 influenza than non-First Nations and had rates of hospitalization nearly triple that of the national cumulative crude rate for all Canadians.” (emphasis added) [3]

The first H1N1 pandemic arrived in the spring of 2009 (Indigenous Peoples represented 17.6 per cent of the reported deaths) and the second wave (8.9 per cent of reported deaths) arrived a few months later in September. When some remote northern Manitoba communities requested medical supplies such as flu kits, face masks and hand sanitizer from the federal government to help manage the second outbreak, Health Canada sent body bags along with the supplies. This response rightly offended Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people right across the country. It was a massive socially and culturally offensive blunder. Not only did the presence of body bags indicate that the communities were doomed, but it was culturally offensive because in some cultures, to prepare for death is to invite death. Health Canada later apologized.

And here we are 11 years later facing another pandemic but this time there has, thankfully, been a shift in how the federal government is assisting Indigenous communities to prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic

There is recognition of the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples and the challenges of remote communities accessing health care and supplies.

A \$305-million fund aimed at helping Indigenous communities deal with COVID-19 was announced March 11, 2020. Ottawa is also sending remote communities temporary portable structures for disease screening in communities that have housing shortages.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Minister Marc Miller made this statement on March 20, 2020:

“Indigenous Peoples are more vulnerable than non-Indigenous. We saw this in H1N1 and we saw this during SARS. We’ve learned from those events but the reality remains that Indigenous Peoples in Canada experience more overcrowding, a higher burden of chronic disease, and some live in highly remote and isolated parts of this country. It is because of this heightened vulnerability that this department and our government is focused on the specific needs of Indigenous communities.” [4]

In an email to APTN, ISC confirmed they are working with Indigenous communities on developing and implementing pandemic plans.

“ISC continues to engage with local health directors, health workers and nurses through various means via regional medical officers of health. These medical officers of health are also working with provincial partners in ensuring that First Nation population is fully integrated into provincial plans,” wrote spokesperson Vanessa Adams.

“ISC has a network of Regional Emergency Management and Communicable Disease Emergency coordinators, as well as Regional Medical Officers to advise and support First Nations across provinces and lead public health emergency preparedness and response as may be required. In British Columbia, the First Nations Health Authority is the service provider, but is included in the ISC’s network.” [5]

The remoteness of some Indigenous communities is both a curse and a blessing. It is a curse in that access to health care is challenging. It is a blessing in that the communities have the option of restricting the flow of people entering the community. Some communities are closing their land borders, checking every vehicle, and turning away outsiders. On Haida Gwaii, Indigenous leadership has asked all non-residents or leisure travellers to stay away from Haida Gwaii and has issued a travel advisory asking all residents, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to avoid unnecessary travel off-island.

Indigenous cultures that include sweat lodges, pipe ceremonies, sun dances, powwows, or potlatches have been asked to suspend those activities to protect their Elders and communities. It is a necessary precaution but for many, it is a reminder of when cultural activities were outlawed.

When a Pandemic Threatens to Erase a Community’s Memory

This is very much a developing situation and we will update this article periodically.

Please stay safe, practice physical distancing, stay home as much as possible and help #HammerTheCurve.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Inception: 2011 ~ Updated: 2020

Inception

The PSAC Okanagan Area Council was proudly formed by four components:

- AGRU** Agricultural union
- CEIU** Canada Employment & Immigration Union
- USJE** Union of Safety and Justice Employees (formerly USGE)
- UVAE** Union of Veterans Affairs Employees

Mandate

Inspiring a union perspective on human rights, nurturing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through project and initiatives, the committee is dedicated and centered around the idea that respect and understanding of human rights can serve as a positive force for change – within union and within community.

Membership

All PSAC Okanagan & area members are welcome to participate within the committee. While the committee tries where possible to work on a consensus basis – voting is limited to those members that identify as equity members.

PSACBC

Our committee is currently one of three constitutionally recognized Human Rights Committees within BC. Committees meet regularly in person and via conference call to discuss issues and plan events relating to PSAC's Aboriginal, Person's With Disability, GLBT, and Racially Visible caucus members.

PSAC National

The Public Service Alliance of Canada unequivocally supports the principles of human rights as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Canadian Human Rights Act. Our committee works within the PSAC structure, which pledges to work toward the achievement of equality for all its members and to eliminate discrimination and increase the participation of disadvantaged groups in the workforce

Executive

Unlike other PSAC committees the PSAC Okanagan Human Rights was structured on a chair basis. All chairs elected will take on secondary duties (such as treasurer, secretary, events).

Meeting & Financial Requirements

The committee will conduct its business so as to meet all of the PSAC participation and financial requirements.

Meetings will be a minimum of 4 per year and may be in person or by conference call to maximize member participation. The AGM will be held in January or February each year. The election of chairs will take place at the annual AGM.

Quorum shall consist of at least two (2) Executive members and a minimum of two (2) delegates from the affiliated bodies.

Consensus base voting is always the preferred method but a simple majority of those present entitled to vote is required to pass a motion if need be.

Logo

