

Aboriginal Equity Coordinator Report on BCFED Convention Nov 23-28, 2014

The Experience

This was the first time I had attended this large, six day convention. It was character-building. My experience had three main parts - getting there, the convention process and the lessons learned.

Getting there

Many details had to be arranged. My local needed to affiliate in time to get credentials to attend. There was a registration deadline for convention. I needed to get time off work, and apply for subsidies to cover my expenses. I needed to find a childcare provider. Making these arrangements took a lot of time and planning. My local did not affiliate in time to get credentials but we were fortunate our PSAC BC Regional Office had some for us! I did not know what expenses could be subsidized or who I could ask for a subsidy! My attendance and childcare needs increased after I saw the agenda. It was challenging to request subsidies when my plans and expense figures expanded, but I forged on and asked for everyone's patience and help. My plans were slowly realized. Wow!



Convention processes

The agenda was jam-packed, with the Human Rights section the day before the main convention, several evening speakers, caucus meetings and social events. I was happy to see that there was a session for convention newbies. I attended and learned the basics. There were many, many resolutions. I just tried to stay on track and listen to the information shared in support or non-support of the resolutions so I could consider myself an informed voter. Various committees submitted their reports. Caucuses elected representatives and the convention floor elected new leaders. Speakers inspired and rallied us. Our union sisters and brothers effected the direction of BCFED's next term. Outgoing BCFED President, Jim Sinclair, showed us how a convention's pace could be managed. I want to mention the "mic muffins". This is such a cute-sounding term for hardcore convention movers-and-shakers. PSAC BC had the seats right in front of the stage, so I got many good pics to tweet and felt like I was reporting on the events.

Value

Getting up to speak at the microphone of a new and huge convention is daunting. It took some time for me to gather my strength and get up there to speak on the Aboriginal equity report. I did not get my turn and was disappointed but took solace in the fact that I had tried to do my job as your Aboriginal equity representative. I was ready! I was terrified but I was gonna do it! I am grateful to my brothers and sisters who encouraged

me. Once I calmed down I saw that there was another opportunity to share my information and point of view, with the Aboriginal caucus. I was able to do that and more: I asked the candidates how they would address these concerns! If you have read my reports or heard me speak at our meetings, you know what I said. In any case, feel free to ask me.

Another learning opportunity presented itself when several equity members noticed that some equity groups were mentioned and some were not mentioned by our new leader during her speech at the podium. My instinct was to tell her directly. It's my job, is it not? I am happy to say that I gave it some consideration and realized that this was something that could be more diplomatically handled by our REVP. I told him that as your Aboriginal equity representative, I had to tell him about this perception of non-recognition. He agreed to take our concern to her. I am more direct than diplomatic but I am learning!

Conclusion

Being a tiny part of this large convention was hard work – character-building. I was there all day, every day. I was engaged. I was challenged. I learned. I grew. I am grateful for the experience. Thank you very much. Chi miigwetch.

All my relations,
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