

POWERTOOL

A Handbook for OPSEU Stewards



**Recruitment
Supplement**

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Recruitment in an Inclusive Union

Canada and Ontario in particular is distinguished as one of the most diverse areas of the world.

Source – 2011 Census

For unions to force governments once again to act in workers' interests, they need to prove themselves as the legitimate voice of working people and a potent force for change. Such legitimacy and power can only come from unions that are inclusive and representative of diverse communities of workers.

A strong and progressive union is one:

- whose leadership reflects its membership
- where all members are actively engaged in all aspects of union life and work
- which pro-actively removes systemic barriers to participation and access to services by disadvantaged groups
- which systematically seeks to achieve diversity, inclusion, and equity in all its structures, programs and practices

Systemic barriers operate through policies or practices that seem neutral and are uniformly applied to all but can have a negative impact on historically disadvantaged groups.

Why this recruitment guide?

The Social Mapping Project identified the need to attract new union activists from the equity base. The work of the Social Mapping Project has been ongoing since 2008, with the goal of creating an inclusive union where everyone, including people from equity-seeking groups can fully participate. (Examples of equity-seeking groups include women, racialized workers, Aboriginal workers, young workers, LGBTTTIAQQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, asexual, queer, questioning, two-spirited) workers, francophone workers, and workers with disabilities.)

This recruitment guide contains information that can be used by locals in their local recruitment activities or initiatives. This information will be attached to the Steward PowerTool manual and will also be included as part of the agenda for the Local Presidents Orientations held at OPSEU Head office.

Welcoming New Members

One of your most important tasks as a union steward is to welcome new workers.

First impressions...

This saying certainly holds true for how new employees feel about the union in their workplace. New employees who get a good first impression from a union steward will be more inclined to join and participate.

Don't wait to welcome a new member as you certainly don't want to miss out on this golden opportunity. The stewards should introduce themselves and give the new worker a brief rundown on the union and the worker's rights. Most workers starting a new job will be thankful to see a friendly face and to have someone to talk to about the union, the employer and the job. Most collective agreements have provisions for new member orientations but sometimes those won't happen for quite some time after the member is hired. Make sure that your local is diligent in introducing itself to new members.

OPSEU has a **New Member Orientation kit** for this purpose. Kits are available through your OPSEU regional office and include the following materials:

- New Member Orientation Kit Folder
- The Owners' Manual - Ontario's Union for Changing Times
- The OPSEU Constitution
- Roles and Responsibilities of Local Union Officers
- The Local Structure flowchart
- OPSEU's Equity Committees and Caucuses
- Union Membership Card

Please note: These materials are available in both French and English.

In addition, the local might want to include:

- A copy of the current collective agreement
- A listing of local officers' contact information
- Any other local materials that the member should know about

Your first discussion with a new member

Here's a checklist of some things you might want to include in your conversation:

- Try to get to know each other. Start off by listening. Ask how they like their new job; where they worked before, do they have any hobbies, are they involved in sports or community organizations? **Note:** do not pry or make the person feel uncomfortable if they do not want to answer personal questions.
- Offer information: where the vending machines are (and what not to buy), where to go, office events, how you get in on ride-sharing, etc.
- Give the new worker a new member orientation kit. Be sure they receive a copy of the contract and explain some of the important provisions to them. Tell them if they have questions that they can come back to speak with you.
- During the conversation, remember that you want the employee to begin identifying with the union. Whenever the worker has a problem, you are the person that they can go to. Explain that the union is the members, the people right there that work with you, not some unknown outsiders. If you get these two ideas across, you've done your job.
- If there's a local meeting or union event coming up you'll want to invite the new worker. Why not make arrangements to take them with you? They'll feel more at ease with someone they know.
- Make sure the worker signs the union card in the kit and that they keep a copy of the wallet size card. Tell the member that they will receive a plastic version of the card in the mail.
- Make sure that the member has your contact information and encourage them to call you if they have any problems.

Basic Information about Recruiting

Many locals lose potential member activists as fast as they can recruit them. There are common problems we all have in keeping members involved and active. Here are some typical ones:

- Local meetings are long and boring
- Members do little other than to listen to leaders talk
- A small clique has all the power and does not encourage others to get involved
- Members are not valued and are never thanked for the work they do
- Members feel useless or frustrated
- The local has no projects that members can be involved in
- Members don't feel welcome or comfortable to speak at union functions
- Members find it hard to identify with local leaders. There are no visible peers.
- Members feel that they are getting nothing out of the union

People usually get involved because they want to do something. They also want something out of being a member. They want to feel welcome and included. You should find out what motivates members and make sure you keep them engaged so that they stay motivated and involved.

Members are usually motivated by:

- Feeling that they are valued and are making a contribution
- Opportunities to learn new skills or get education about issues that interest them
- Working on issues that will improve their lives or the lives of their families and communities
- Feeling like they are part of a team
- Activities that entertain them or add to their social life
- Rewards in terms of status, personal development or access to other opportunities.

Some things you can do to keep members motivated and involved:

- Do an introductory workshop for all new members so that they understand the union and its work
- Welcome and introduce all new members at the beginning of each meeting
- Run regular education sessions for all members - either as part of regular meetings or in special local educationals
- Encourage members to get involved in union or community projects and campaigns
- Give people responsibilities and tasks and team them up with experienced members - they will feel useful and valued
- Thank people and praise them in meetings for work done
- Structure your meetings so that they are exciting and everyone gets a chance to participate
- Organize social events for members such as barbecues, picnics, movie nights and other outings
- Spend time talking with members and getting to know them

Building an inclusive union means:

- Doing everything possible to respect all members, giving them full access to resources, and promoting just and equal treatment and opportunity.
- Working to eliminate all forms of discrimination.
- Engaging all its members in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- Valuing diversity.
- Responding quickly to harassment, racism and other discriminating incidents.
- Not allowing acts of exclusion and injustice based on group identity and other factors to occur and/or continue.

Why is building an inclusive union important?

- All members have the right to be part of decisions that affect their lives and the groups they belong to.
- Diversity enriches our lives, so it is worth our while to value our diversity.

Creating Opportunities to Identify Similarities, Differences, and Experiences – A Local Checklist

- Your local has discussed why similarities and differences, are important to union work.
- You have created opportunities for people to share their similarities, learn about differences, and celebrate diversity.
- Your local has held discussions to find common ground and share their experiences.
- Your local celebrates traditions and events of all cultures and discusses how to build on them.
- Your local holds events to educate members about a group or culture's identity and or current situation.
- Your local has discussed the challenges of creating diverse opportunities and how to overcome them.

What Types of Events Can You Host to Celebrate Diversity?

At the same time that you are carrying out a process to help individuals find common ground, you can also plan events that celebrate diversity. You could ask individuals during the planning of these events. These events should be open to everyone in the local.

Find out how different groups celebrate, commemorate, or grieve over significant events in their history and culture. Take one common subject (e.g., birth, death, independence, etc.), educate the members about the meaning and value of the related events, and then share the practices with everyone. Publicize the information and the events.

Some questions to guide the planning of events to celebrate diversity could include:

- What are the major celebrations and events in your culture?
- What do people in your culture do on that day/week/month?
- What would you like to share with the rest of the local about that celebration or event?
- Are there similar celebrations and events by the other groups in the local or community?

Ideas or opportunities for local diversity education:

- Share articles in the locals newsletter, website, Facebook page
- Posters on union bulletin boards that celebrate diversity
- Host a movie night, show a documentary, have a guest speaker
- Invite an OPSEU equity committee or caucus rep to speak at a local meeting
- Host an equity educational
- Play music from around the world before/after events
- Host or sponsor a cultural art event
- Organize a “hobby fair”
- Celebrate history or heritage months
- Host a multicultural trivia game night
- Host a global potluck
- Donate or get involved in an international solidarity cause
- Encourage members to attend other OPSEU Equity events
- Arrange and facilitate discussions in the local about topics such as institutionalized racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination

Being Inclusive When We Serve Food

Serving food at union functions is very common and is a great way to encourage members to attend union meetings and events. Diet and food requirements are a very important aspect of our daily lives. There are many times when people run into difficulties obtaining appropriate food for the meeting or event. Below is a short guide on things that you need to consider when serving food at your next union event.

Inclusive catering – things to consider:

Muslims and Jews do not eat pork and are usually hesitant to eat at functions that serve pork because of the fear that the non-pork dishes may be “tainted”. Halal and kosher food is not only pork-free but must be served on dishes that have never served pork. However, as this may be difficult to achieve, it is sufficient to have halal food served on a separate table (or just separated from the non-halal/non-kosher dishes) with the provision of separate serving utensils.

Very Important Point: It is not only the ingredients that make a meal halal/kosher, but also the way it is prepared and how it is served.

Muslim and Jewish members are also more likely to be comfortable with vegetarian food (with strict separation of utensils etc.) than with pork-free dishes among dishes with pork. Many members from South Asia, South-East and East Asia do not eat beef. Most are very comfortable with vegetarian food although the mixing of utensils can still be an issue. In general, when in doubt, serve rice.

In addition to addressing the requirements of members from different cultural backgrounds, the needs of members with particular health related dietary requirements may need to be addressed. Food sensitivities, such as lactose and gluten intolerance, are surprisingly common, while some people are allergic or sensitive to particular foods, such as nuts (remember OPSEU's nut-free policy), shell fish or egg protein. Providing a detailed list of ingredients can allow people to select appropriate food and avoid the unpleasant and potentially dangerous consequences of eating foods containing known allergens.

Vegetarian and Vegan Food

Serving vegetarian and vegan food will cater for people from most religions and cultural backgrounds. Note that people who are vegetarians generally will not eat anything that has to do with the slaughter of animals, including gelatin, animal-based stocks or rennet, while vegans, in addition to these restrictions, do not eat any animal products, including eggs, milk/milk products or honey.

Provide varied, interesting and well-balanced vegan/vegetarian food. Simply providing salad, rice or bread is not really acceptable. Ensure there is an adequate protein source with vegetarian/vegan food.

Suggestions for serving inclusive food at union events:

- Ensure separation of halal food and vegetarian food (separate table)
- Use a separate BBQ plate for vegetarian/vegan foods. It is not acceptable to have meat cooking alongside veggie burgers
- Ensure separation of utensils
- Label food – “pork-free”, “beef-free”, “vegetarian”, “vegan” etc.
- Provide a list of ingredients whenever possible
- Recruit members to monitor the food service and advise members who are unsure if the food is halal/vegetarian etc.
- Include dairy-free options

- Serve food such as fresh fruit and vegetables, foods that are low in fat, low in sugar, gluten-free and dairy-free foods. Try to ensure that there is a protein option for snacks and breakfasts.
- Remember, no nut or Coke products as per OPSEU policy.

Creating a Welcoming Cross Cultural Environment Top 10 Things You can Do!

1. If offering food at your meetings, always include a vegetarian option.
2. Clearly label the food so people can make informed choices about what they are eating.
3. If in doubt, do not assume. Ask questions in a respectful and open manner and know that most people welcome an environment where they can talk about their backgrounds.
4. Take the time to learn how to pronounce and spell your members' names accurately.
5. When people do not get involved, do not assume it is because they are not interested. Ask questions about what might interest them or how they could see themselves getting more involved.
6. Avoid swearing and the use of aggressive language. People who are new to the Union or to their jobs may not be accustomed to this language and may feel intimidated about getting involved.
7. Be mindful when others are speaking. Allow them time to express their opinions and try to respectfully answer their questions.
8. Avoid cliques at your meetings. Build activities into your meetings that provide opportunities for everyone to get to know each other and ensure there are roles for everyone to get involved.
9. When planning a large gathering, send out a questionnaire in advance that canvasses your members' needs regarding accommodation.
10. Refrain from making negative comments or jokes about people's clothing, food, accent, way of speaking etc. It is not intent, but impact that matters.

Taken from the OPSEU course Cross Cultural Communication at Work

Tips on Cross-Cultural Communication

- Challenge your own and others' assumptions.
- When asking someone to explain a point of view different from your own, be sure to convey that your intention is to understand that person's viewpoint, not to have him or her justify it. Remember the OPSEU Statement of Respect.
- Stand up and speak out when others are not valued or their ideas or views are not heard or taken into account.
- Broaden your understanding of cross-cultural communication issues including intergenerational issues.
- Watch educational videos. Learn about your own cultural values and background.
- Learn to challenge yourself and others to discuss visible and invisible cultural barriers.
- Continually monitor your automatic thoughts and language for unexamined assumptions and stereotypical responses.
- Learn how to work through cross-cultural disagreements by taking the time to reflect on strategies to communicate across cultures.

Adapted from The Diversity Toolkit (A Product of Cook Ross, Inc.) <http://www.thediversitytoolkit.com/contentpages/sampletool2.htm>

Cross-Cultural Communication: (also frequently referred to as “intercultural communication”) implies interaction with persons of different cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, religious, age and class backgrounds. “Cross-cultural communication” is a process of exchanging, negotiating, and mediating one's cultural differences through language, non-verbal gestures, and space relationships. It is also the process by which people express their openness to an intercultural experience.

Strategies for Inclusive Communication

Language barriers are a common challenge. Always remember that communication is a two-way process. What many of us often don't realize is, that it's not simply a matter of a person's accent but about our own way of communicating that potentially creates the greatest barriers to effective communication. Below are some strategies that you can use to be more inclusive in your day to day communication.

Speak slowly and clearly

- Focus on clear speech and slowing down your pace of speaking. Even if you're pressured for time, don't rush through your communication. Doing so often takes more time, as miscommunication and misunderstanding can result and ultimately you'll have to invest additional time in clearing up the confusion. Speaking slowly also doesn't mean that you have to speak any louder or shout. Just because someone first language is not English does not make them hearing impaired. Even if the member understands English, different people have different levels of fluency. You may be speaking or introducing new information so fast that everything becomes a blur to them. Slow down and avoid raising the volume.

Ask for clarification

- If you are not 100% sure you've understood what others have said, politely ask for clarification. Avoid assuming you've understood what's been said.

Frequently check for understanding

- Regularly check that both you've understood what's been said and that others have understood you. Try practicing reflective listening to check understanding, for example, use open-ended questions such as, "what's your understanding of this"? instead of saying "is that clear"?

Avoid using idioms

- The English language is full of idioms. Examples of commonly used idioms include sayings like, "Hit the ground running", "Out in left field", "Let's touch base", "Try and strike a deal". As a good general rule, if

the phrase requires knowledge of other information, recognize that this may make your communication more difficult to be understood.

Be careful of jargon

- In the union we love to use all kinds of jargon. Watch the use of abbreviations, acronyms and other “union” language that may not be understood by others. If you use union jargon, make sure that you provide a description or explanation of what it is that you’re referring to.

Be specific

- Define any expectations clearly. Instead of saying, “Please get back to me shortly”, say ‘Please email by 5 pm on Wednesday, February 21.’

Choose your method of communication effectively

- Carefully choose your form of communication (face to face, phone, video conference, email, text message, etc.). Be mindful not to overuse email or text messages. While it may seem convenient and time efficient, there are times when email and text messages are likely to be ineffective. When your message is complex, complicated or there is tension or conflict that needs to be resolved, it’s advisable to switch to another way of communicating.

Provide information multiple ways

- Follow-up phone calls with emails or communiques that summarize what’s been said. When possible, provide information, presentations, agendas, etc. in advance so those working in their non-native language can get familiar with materials.

Be patient

- Cross-cultural communication takes more time. If not at all times, certainly initially you cannot expect your communication to occur with the same speed and ease as when you are communicating with someone from your own culture.

Ask for help

- If others are around who speak the same language as the members', don't be shy about asking for their assistance. People who are bilingual are often willing to translate for those who aren't.

Don't be afraid to use technology

- The barrier of language is rapidly disappearing thanks to technology. It may not solve all of your communication problems but it may make things a little easier in some cases. Try using Google Translate, Word Lens or Skype Translator.

Maintain a positive attitude

- Overcoming language barriers can be frustrating for you and for your members. A positive attitude, a smile or a friendly face can help break the tension and make communicating easier.

Union Meetings, Events and Activities Members with Disabilities

- Let members know accommodations can be provided upon request and who to contact for more information.
- Schedule union meetings/functions at an accessible location.
- Be familiar with travel directions to the meeting/activity location, including the path of travel into the building or area where your event is being held.
- Be aware that a member with a disability may need to arrange for transportation to and from the event. Provide the member with an estimate of how long the meeting will be and the expected end time. Remember it is important to ensure start and end times are adhered to.
- Be aware of the meeting/events location's accessible features including restrooms, drinking fountains, telephones etc.
- Identify assistive technologies if they are available
- Use a normal tone of voice when welcoming the member. Only raise your voice upon request.
- Call the person by their first name.
- Always introduce yourself and other local members if present. Offer to shake hands, if appropriate.
- Speak directly to the member instead of any companion, personal attendant, or interpreter, when greeting the person.
- Provide alternate formats (e.g., large print, Braille) of all necessary documents as needed.
- Remember to include employees with disabilities in planning local union activities.

Mobility, Sensory, Cognitive, and Psychiatric Impairments

The following tips briefly address a range of situations involving members with motor or mobility impairments, sensory impairments, and cognitive or psychiatric impairments. **This is not a comprehensive guide.** For more information or assistance contact the Equity Unit at OPSEU Head Office.

Individuals with Mobility Impairments

- Do not make assumptions about limitations based on appearance or the use of assistive devices. For example, individuals who use mobility aids such as canes, walkers, or wheelchairs have different

limitations and may use a mobility aid regularly or only as required by their limitations on a daily basis. Also, people who appear to be mobile may require accommodations such as accessible parking because they are unable to walk long distances due to a medical impairment (e.g., a person with asthma or a heart condition).

- Do not touch or lean on a wheelchair, move a person's walker or cane without being asked, or pet or distract a service animal without first asking the individual with the disability if it is okay. A wheelchair, mobility aid, or service animal is part of an individual's personal space; an extension of that individual.
- Be aware of the location you are holding a union event and its accessible and inaccessible elements.
- Make the necessary accessibility changes according to the specific needs of the member(s) (e.g. keeping paths/aisles clear, greeters at meetings etc.).
- Ask whether a person needs assistance before you help. Extend the same courtesies to individuals with disabilities as you would others. Do not be afraid to ask how you can help.
- Sit down when speaking for more than a few minutes with a person who uses a wheelchair so you are at eye level.
- Be careful about the language you use. For example, people who use wheelchairs or scooters are not confined or bound to them. The wheelchair enables the person to get where he/she needs to go. It does not confine the person.

Individuals with Vision Impairments

- Be familiar with the route of travel to the meeting location.
- Provide descriptive directions that do not require the person to rely on visual references. When appropriate, note if Braille signage is posted on walls and doors.
- Verbally greet and identify yourself before extending your hand to greet a person who is blind. Use the same courtesy when entering or leaving a room, or saying good bye when ending a conversation. Do not just walk away when talking with a person who is blind or visually impaired.
- Offer your arm instead of taking the arm of a person who is blind or visually impaired when guiding the person. As you walk, tell the person where you are going, make note of steps or slopes, opening doors or other obstacles.

- Offer the member(s) a guided tour of the location if applicable.
- Do not pet or distract a guide dog. When walking along-side someone who is using a guide dog, walk on the side opposite the animal.
- Offer to read written information, when appropriate.
- Provide materials, such as meeting minutes in an accessible format (e.g., large print (20 point font), Braille, or accessible web page accessed with a screen reader).

Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Be aware that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate in various ways. Pay attention to cues such as whether the person uses sign language, is reading lips, writing, or gesturing. Do not be afraid to say that you do not understand if you have trouble understanding the person's speech. It is better to find another way to communicate, such as through writing notes, than to pretend to understand.
- Do not put hands in front of your face, or food or other items in your mouth when communicating with someone who is reading lips. Also, do not turn your head or walk away while talking. When possible, speak in a well-lit room that is free from background noises. It is important to maintain order in a meeting and that side conversations are curtailed.
- Maintain eye contact and direct your communication to the person who is deaf when using a sign-language interpreter.
- Speak using a normal tone of voice unless asked to raise your voice, and re-phrase rather than repeat the same words if you are not understood.
- Take turns when talking during a meeting so the person who is deaf or hard of hearing can read lips if they are able to. This would also assist the sign language interpreter in relaying accurate information who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Get the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing before you start speaking by waiving your hand, tapping on the shoulder, or through some other appropriate gesture.
- Talk with the individual about their preferred method of communication. When appropriate, provide a qualified sign-language interpreter.
- If using videos ensure that they are captioned.

- Remember to include members who are deaf or hard of hearing in casual conversation and social events. Provide a sign-language interpreter for union sponsored social events, when appropriate.

Individuals with Speech Impairments

- Be patient and listen. Do not complete words or sentences for the individual. Do not be afraid to say you do not understand. Ask them to repeat and then listen carefully. Repeat what you have heard to verify. Or, ask them to write it down.
- Be attentive in your mannerisms by maintaining conversational eye contact and focusing on the content of communication rather than the delivery of the communication.
- Relax and communicate as you would normally.
- Provide an agenda and other materials in advance of the meeting, if possible, to allow the individual time to prepare effectively.

Individuals with Respiratory Impairments or Chemical Sensitivities

- Remember OPSEU's Scent Free Policy and be prepared to enforce it at all union functions.
- Be aware that products that are commonly used (e.g. air fresheners, cleaning products, magic markers, colognes, and fragranced personal products) can trigger a reaction for someone who has a respiratory or chemical sensitivity. Use scent free or less toxic products whenever possible.
- Pay attention to good ventilation, room temperature and overall indoor air quality.
- Do not make assumptions based upon appearance. For example, a person with asthma may not appear to be limited, but may need accessible parking because they are not able to walk long distances or be in the cold or humidity for long periods of time.

Individuals with Psychiatric Impairments

- Avoid stereotypes and assumptions about the individual and how they may interact with others. In most cases, it will not be obvious that someone has a psychiatric impairment.
- Recognize and respect the differences in people. People with psychiatric impairments may behave differently than other individuals,

may have trouble interpreting social cues, or may have different ways of coping with their impairment.

- Respect personal space and do not touch the individual or their personal belongings.
- Provide support and assistance, as appropriate.
- Be patient. Allow the individual time to think and answer questions independently.

Individuals with Cognitive Impairments

- Do not assume that because someone has a cognitive impairment, such as a learning disability, that they have below-average intelligence. The individual may have above-average intelligence, but may have difficulty receiving, expressing, or processing information.
- Ask the person if they prefer verbal, written, or hands-on instruction, or a combination of methods in training and work-related situations. For example, if providing verbal instructions, it may be helpful to follow-up with an e-mail that clarifies your request.
- Speak directly to the individual, rather than his/her companion, and use words and phrases according to his or her level of complexity.
- Be patient. Allow the individual time to think and answer questions independently.

Engaging Young Workers

Who are ‘young workers’?

In OPSEU ‘young workers’ are described as being 35 years old and under according to the Terms of Reference of the Provincial Young Workers Committee.

An easy way to reach out to young workers is to simply ask them if they are interested in coming to a local meeting, participating in a union event, or maybe being paired up with a more experienced union activist. Even if the member doesn’t identify as a ‘young worker,’ a new member who is not yet involved in the union will benefit from making connections with the local.

Try to engage new and young union members

Young workers are often the most vulnerable in a workplace. They are typically the ones with the temporary or part-time jobs. They may work odd hours under conditions that can be hazardous to their health and safety. They may not know when and how to stand up to their employer. And they may not know where to start when it comes to learning about and enforcing their rights.

Reaching out to young members also helps ensure that each and every member knows and is enforcing their collective agreement rights. Reaching out to young members helps to ensure that everyone is being treated fairly in a safe work environment.

With more active members, the union has more shop stewards, more functioning committees which means stronger locals, all of which benefit the union as a whole.

Young and new members bring energy and new ideas. The energy, experience and ideas of a new generation will keep the union strong. Revitalizing and re-energizing the union will be a key challenge. New members who haven’t typically been involved in the union, including younger members, will bring fresh approaches and perspectives to our work for equality and justice in the workplace and in society.

There is no one-size-fits-all model for activating young workers or other new members. That's why it's important to be creative and try new things. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. And when you have successes, share them with other locals in your area, region and with other union members.

Like any other member, young workers may have a variety of reasons for not being involved in the union. Here are a few to consider.

Possible barriers to young or new members' involvement in the union:

- Young members may feel more intimidated by their manager or employer.
- They may have had a negative experience at their first union meeting, where they felt excluded or confused.
- They may have misconceptions about what a union is and why we have unions in the workplace.
- They may be working casual shifts or juggling more than one job and find it hard to make time to get involved in union activities.
- They may think that union education or conference opportunities are only open to permanent employees or members who are already involved in the union

Strategies to overcome barriers:

- Hold a lunchtime information session where all new or young members can come and share their questions or concerns about workplace issues.
- Make union meetings and events a welcoming place to be.
- Make a point of offering to answer younger members' questions.
- As local leaders, be accessible and visible.
- Offer mentoring and support to younger members who want to take on more leadership roles.
- Find out what young workers want to know. What are their concerns in the workplace? What issues do they care about? How can the union be involved in the things that matter to young members?
- Be open to all ideas and issues that come forward.

See: Potential Barriers to Young Member Involvement chart on pages 26 - 29 for additional information.

Make meetings accessible to young workers.

- A member's first meeting is like a first impression. If it goes well, new members are more likely to come back and feel a part of the union. But if it's a negative or intimidating experience, for many members it will be their first and last union meeting.

Some ideas for creating a meeting that leaves a good first impression:

- At the start of the meeting, take some time to explain the rules used to run meetings.
- Leave time at the beginning, middle, and end of every meeting for new members to ask questions. Let new members know that all questions are welcome.
- Use plain language when talking about issues. Avoid union jargon and acronyms.
- After the meeting, follow up with the new member to find out if they have questions, thoughts or ideas they'd like to share.

Set up a buddy system.

Create a sign-up sheet for experienced activists and one for young or new workers who are interested in participating in a mentoring process. This doesn't have to be formal. Mentors can meet for coffee on a break. They can just volunteer to answer 'young members' questions during local meetings.

What do I have to do to be a mentor to a young worker?

- Make time available to regularly talk with a young worker and answer questions.
- Participate in union events with a young worker.
- Explore creative ways for young workers to be involved in the union.
- Support young workers to take on leadership roles in your Local.
- Be willing to listen to new ideas and be open to doing things differently

- Be prepared to share power and listen.
- Offer challenges to the person you're mentoring that will help build their skills and confidence.
- Be open to learning from the person you're mentoring.

Create opportunities for involvement.

- Encourage and support young workers to attend union education opportunities and events.
- Consider selecting young workers in your Local to attend conferences and conventions.
- Bring young workers together so they can get to know each other, share stories and experiences.
- Find out what young workers are concerned about and try to find ways to respond. This may mean supporting new causes or trying new things.
- Be persistent.
- Don't give up. It may take a while to involve young workers in the union.
- Start small and expand. Getting one or two young workers involved in the union each year will make a big difference over time.
- Young workers may also come and go more frequently, but remember that they'll take their positive union experiences with them!

OPSEU's Provincial Young Workers Committee is dedicated to promoting young worker involvement in the Union and to advocate and educate around young worker issues. For more information check the OPSEU website under Equity Information Section or contact the OPSEU Resource Centre at 1-800-268-7376.

Potential Barriers to Young Member Involvement

Possible Barriers	Suggestions to Overcome
Personal Life	
Starting a family/family commitments	Provide daycare or a stipend for daycare costs.
Busy getting an education	Consider their time constraints and try to schedule meetings/events outside of class time.
Involved in other social activities	Encourage them to make presentations at local executive/general membership meetings. Get them involved on a social/recreation committee.
Involved in sports	Sponsor their team.
Other	
Work	
Intimidated by the employer	Make sure that new members get their union orientations, introduce member to each other, to their stewards and support stewards.
Want to be a “team player”	Reinforce that unions are not the enemy of the employer. Offer a “Know your Rights” workshop.

Working casual/part-time/temporary	Ask for their input on issues affecting part-timers. Support them to form a sub-group to put forward their issues. Support and train them to run for the bargaining team.
Working more than one job	Consider the schedule of multiple job holders when organizing meetings and events.
Lack job security	Provide information and support, but do not expect them to take risks during vulnerable periods like probation. Push for better language during negotiations.
Health and Safety	Provide information and support about rights and responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act including the right to refuse unsafe work and no reprisals for asserting their rights under the act.
Other	

Possible Barriers	Suggestions to Overcome
Union	
View unions as corrupt institutions	Offer education opportunities and share power. Demonstrate democracy in the union.
No visible peers	Recruit at least one young worker as a steward or executive member. Encourage young members to train as OPSEU facilitators. Work with young members to put on a “Know your Rights” session.
Ageism	Challenge ageist comments and encourage discussion of stereotypes.
“No one asked me”	Run orientations for young members on a regular basis. Get to know them, establish two-way communication. Mentor young members to co-facilitate the orientation sessions.
Meetings are boring	Try to streamline meetings, schedule in discussions of relevant issues, avoid long reports.
Meetings happen when I’m working	Schedule meetings at different times.
Union jargon	Explain what terms mean, avoid acronyms and jargon, make sure to use clear language. Provide a glossary of commonly used words and terms.

Don't understand union procedures	Explain union procedures to new members and provide ongoing mentoring. Offer parliamentary procedures workshops.
Other	

Creating a Safe Union

Increase Awareness by:

- Understanding your own feelings on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, asexual, queer, questioning, two-spirited (LGBTTIAQQ2S) issues
- Learning more about socialization, prejudice, and privilege
- Recognizing why it is important to be an ally
- Understanding how heterosexism and homophobia affect both LGBTTIAQQ2S people and people who are not LGBTTIAQQ2S

Knowledge and Education:

- Learn about LGBTTIAQQ2S communities and cultures
- Learn about LGBTTIAQQ2S and Safe Zones and symbols
- Critically think about the effect that our union practices, policies and bylaws have on the lives of LGBTTIAQQ2S members
- Find out information about LGBTTIAQQ2S resources that are available
- Talk with and learn from LGBTTIAQQ2S members

Actions to take:

- Challenge homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism
- Avoid assumptions, and ask about things you don't understand
- Provide correct information when you hear myths and misperceptions about LGBTTIAQQ2S people
- Use inclusive language, avoid stereotyping, and do not assume everyone is heterosexual
- Support your LGBTTIAQQ2S members

The society we live in allows LGBTTIAQQ2S issues to remain largely invisible. Even though you might have good intentions, you might not know how to best support members. How much you know about the issues that impact LGBTTIAQQ2S members directly affects your effectiveness as an ally.

Most of us know when to react to overtly racist and sexist behavior. There are some slurs that, in no uncertain terms, are deemed unacceptable for use in the union (Statement of Respect) and most everywhere else. But when people hear anti-LGBTTIAQQ2S slurs being used, they often have

no idea how to respond. Most people haven't been taught how. Training can help you learn how to appropriately respond to incidents of bias.

Standing up for LGBTTTIAQQ2S rights

Unfortunately, bias still sometimes can lead to harassment or violence. Allies need to know how to stand up for LGBTTTIAQQ2S rights while being conscious of the safety and security of themselves and others.

How Can we help to Create a "Safe Zone"?

There are many things that you can do to make you, your workspace and the union feel like a Safe Zone for LGBTTTIAQQ2S members. Here are some suggestions:

- Believe and support that the union is enriched and enlivened by the participation of LGBTTTIAQQ2S members.
- Be willing to engage in genuine dialog and interaction.
- Be willing to discuss issues impacting LGBTTTIAQQ2S member's lives in a non-judgmental manner.
- Know about LGBTTTIAQQ2S resources and be willing to refer members to support and information resources in the union. See below OPSEU's Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel's description.
- Comfortably use inclusive language, avoid stereotyping, and do not assume everyone is heterosexual.
- Maintain confidentiality.

What Else Can we Do?

- Acquaint yourself with people that identify as LGBTTTIAQQ2S. Learn more by reading books, making friends, attending functions, and celebrating!
- Challenge homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism (e.g. remarks, jokes, behaviors, cartoons, language, etc.)
- Continue to educate yourself by attending programs and events

OPSEU's Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel provides representation and support to our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, asexual, queer, questioning, two-spirited (LGBTTTIAQQ2S) members. We promote equality and a harassment-free work environment. Tackling discrimination in the workplace means addressing and tackling discrimination in our communities, unions and homes. For

more information check the OPSEU website under the Equity Information Section or contact the OPSEU Resource Centre at 1-800-268-7376.

Body language and how we communicate

'Body language,' includes all the communication through the non-verbal means. This can include how we greet others, how we sit or stand, our facial expressions, our clothes, hair styles, tone of voice, eye movements, how we listen, how we breathe, how close we stand to others, and how we touch others. The pressure of body language can especially be felt in emotional situations where body language usually prevails over words.

Understanding Body Language

Head - In most societies, a nodding head signifies agreement or approval. But in some cultures, like parts of Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey, a nodding head means 'no'. In most Asian cultures, the head is where spirit resides and one should not touch another's head.

Face - Facial expressions reflect emotions, feelings, and attitudes. While expressing 'true' feeling and emotion is valued in the West, it is prohibited in the East. Asians, who are taught to practice self-control, are often labeled as 'emotionless' and of possessing 'mixed-up emotions.' Smiling in the East is not necessarily a sign of happiness; rather it can signify 'yes,' or 'I don't understand what you said,' or it can be a cover-up for embarrassment.

Eyes – While good eye contact is praised and expected in the West, it can be seen as a sign of disrespect and challenge in other cultures, including many Asian and African cultures. Less eye contact may be considered more respectful in these cultures.

Nose - Tapping the nose is more common in Europe than in the United States. It means 'confidential' in England but 'watch out!' in Italy. Blowing the nose on public streets, while seen as an impolite gesture in North America, is a common practice in most Asian countries. This rids the body of waste and; therefore, it's seen as healthy. At the same time some Asians may not understand why Americans blow their noses onto a Kleenex that is put back in their pocket and carried with them throughout the day.

Lips and Mouth - Kissing is a sign of love or affection in the West. People kiss when they meet or when they say goodbye. But kissing is viewed as an intimate act in some Asian countries and is not permissible in public. In some cultures, such as Filipino, Puerto Rican, and several Latin American, people use their lips to point, instead of a finger.

Arms - Some cultures, like the Italians, use their arms freely. Others, like the Japanese, are more reserved; in Japan it is considered impolite to gesture with broad movements of the arms.

Hands - Of all the body parts, the hands probably are used most for communicating non-verbally. Hand waves are used for greeting, beckoning, or farewell. The American 'goodbye' wave can be interpreted in many parts of Europe and Latin America as the signal for 'no.' The Italian 'goodbye' wave can be interpreted by Americans as the gesture for 'come here.' The American 'come here' gesture can be seen as an insult in most Asian countries where they use it for calling an animal. Asians call others with a similar hand movement but with their palm downward.

While both right and left hands have equal status in the West, the right hand has special significance and the left hand is 'dirty' in the Middle East and in some Asian countries. It is best to accept or offer cards or gifts with the right hand or both. The 'O.K.' sign (the thumb and the forefinger form a circle) means 'fine' or 'O.K.' in most cultures. However, it means 'zero' or 'worthless' in France and many European countries. The same signal is an insult in Greece, Brazil, Italy, Turkey, and Russia. A 'thumb-up' sign indicates an 'O.K.' or 'good job' in most cultures but it is an insult in Australia, New Zealand, and in most African countries.

Handshaking – This is the common form of greeting and leave taking in Western culture. While it is becoming accepted in Asia, Asians still prefer a different form of greeting: a bow in East Asia, a 'wai' (joining the two hands together like in prayer) for some Southern and Southeastern Asian countries. Asians and Middle Easterners prefer a soft handshake. Strong grips are interpreted as a sign of aggression.

Legs and Feet - Sitting cross-legged is common in North America and some European countries but it is viewed as disrespectful in Asia and the Middle East where a solid and balanced sitting posture is the prevailing

custom. In Asia and the Middle East, resting the ankle over the other knee risks pointing the sole of your shoe at another person, which is considered a very rude gesture. One should never point or move an object with their feet in these cultures.

Becoming sensitive to the clues of body language can help us communicate more effectively with members from other cultures. We can understand what people are saying even when they are not talking. We can sense when members are silent and digesting information, or when they are silent and confused. We can share feelings too strong or too difficult to be expressed in words. Body language can help us spot contradictions between what a member says and what they really mean.

Finally, we can learn to be more sensitive to our own bodies, to see what messages we are sending and to see ourselves as others see us. We are our bodies.

The Role of Eye Contact in Different Cultures

Eye contact is considered a basic component of social interaction in Canada. Typically, in social situations, Canadians make eye contact when first beginning to speak, then look away, then, periodically, return to the eyes of the person with whom we're talking (the average duration of eye contact amongst North Americans is about three seconds).

Someone who won't make eye contact may be considered shy, rude, bored, or untrustworthy but staring directly into someone's eyes is NOT the norm in different cultures.

The United Kingdom, United States, Australia and Western Europe all have fairly similar social expectations of when and where eye contact is appropriate...which is most of the time!

Aboriginal groups

Staring directly into someone's eyes is not the cultural norm amongst some Aboriginal groups. If you find that an Aboriginal person isn't looking at you, it may be related to cultural teachings, gender roles, or the after-effects of imbalanced relationships with authority figures at residential schools.

Middle Eastern Cultures

While the many cultures of Middle Eastern countries can hardly be grouped together, they do have a few common trends – one of which is their use of eye contact.

Eye contact is less common, and considered less appropriate than in Western cultures. There are strict gender rules, whereby women should not make too much eye contact with men as it could be misconstrued as a romantic interest.

Intense eye contact is often a method used to show sincerity. Long, strong eye contact can mean 'believe me, I'm telling you the truth'.

Asian Cultures

Asian cultures place great importance on respect. Hierarchies are much more visible in their societies than in Western cultures, and their social behaviors mirror this.

In countries such as China and Japan, eye contact is not considered an essential to social interaction, instead it is often considered inappropriate.

African and Latin American Cultures

Many African and Latin American cultures, while unique in many ways, remain strongly hierarchical societies. In many circumstances intense eye contact is seen as aggressive, confrontational and extremely disrespectful.

Be aware of your own biases when interpreting facial cues. This can be challenging. There's no easy answer, whether to make eye contact or not, and for how long. Pay attention to the other persons face, and do your best to use facial behaviour that makes the other person feel comfortable.

First Nation Elder Protocol

Here is some general guidance as there are 600 plus first nations and many, many different sets of Elder protocol. Elders do not need to be invited to every meeting, conference, forum, government announcement but they should be invited to open, bless or welcome every meeting that involves Aboriginal People. If your company is having a meeting that involves Aboriginal People, a good first step is to determine on whose territory you are holding the meeting, contact that community and enquire about inviting an Elder to open your meeting. Even if your meeting involves Aboriginal Peoples from outside that territory, protocol may require that you invite an Elder from the community.

Another role of an Elder opening a meeting is for them to set the mood or tone of the meeting. A well delivered message of "we must work together" via the Elder can really help set the stage for positive, spirited discussions.

Some people may assume that First Nation territory is rural only so protocols need only be addressed when working in the country. If that is your assumption, you need to look at a map of Canada that shows traditional territories and/or treaty lands. For example, if you are having a meeting in the heart of Toronto then you are on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

Once you have determined on whose territory you are holding your meeting, you should then call their office and ask if they could provide you with the phone number of an Elder.

Questions to ask:

- Name of Elder
- Spelling of name
- How they should be addressed
- Contact information
- Appropriate honoraria:
 - never ask the Elder
 - the honoraria should be ascertained beforehand - keep in mind that you are asking to impose a monetary value on a sacred ceremony
 - the honoraria respects the value of what the Elder is offering

- Travel arrangements:
 - be prepared to cover travelling costs (do you need to send a car or taxi to pick them up);
 - will they be travelling on their own or with someone;
 - name of travelling companion and whether or not that person requires payment
- Food allergies, dietary requirements if inviting to stay for breakfast, lunch or dinner

When contacting an Elder, remember that a phone call is better than a letter. Elders often rely more on the spoken word than the written word. Do not contact them months in advance and then leave it at that. Contact them again a few weeks in advance and then again a few days in advance. Be prepared that they may have to cancel due to community events or health issues. If that is the case, contact the community again and ask for their advice on inviting another Elder.

At the expected time of arrival, have someone at the front door of the building to greet the Elder and their travelling companion. Do not assume that they will shake hands. As you are introducing yourself wait to see if they offer their hand. If they do, do not squeeze their hands - do not apply any pressure greater than what they provide; expect it to be a soft hand that you shake and you will be fine. Be sure to let the person who will be introducing and thanking the Elder know about hand shaking considerations.

At large events consider having a quiet room where the Elder can prepare for the smudge or blessing, rest after travelling or before returning to their home. Also have a snack and a drink available upon their arrival or if it is midday or evening, plan to have a meal available.

During the ceremony, everyone stands, head bowed, hands by side or clasped in front. Don't sit down until you are sure the Elder has finished speaking. Do not talk, text or take phone calls during the ceremony. Be in the moment and ask the group or audience to also be in the moment. When the Elder has completed the ceremony, thank them and their companion. Ensure they are guided to the quiet room and offer the honoraria at that time, not in front of the audience/group. Once they are ready to make their way home, usher them to the front door and ensure their transportation is cued up.

If you are on a first name basis with an Elder should you use it out in public? Use caution as people may not know you are on a first name basis and may be offended with your use of the first name.

Taken from *Working Effectively with Aboriginal People*

What is Smudging?

Smudging is a tradition, common to many First Nations, which involves the burning of one or more medicines gathered from the earth. The four sacred medicines used in First Nations' ceremonies are tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass. The most common medicines used in a smudge are sweetgrass, sage and cedar.

Smudging has been passed down from generation to generation. There are many ways and variations on how a smudge is done. Historically, Métis and Inuit people did not smudge; however, today many Métis and Inuit people have incorporated smudging into their lives.

A community Grandmother presented the following as the steps and rationale for this cleansing process:

- We smudge to clear the air around us.
- We smudge to clean our minds so that we will have good thoughts of others.
- We smudge our eyes so that we will only see the good in others.
- We smudge our ears so that we will only listen to positive things about others.
- We smudge our mouths so that we will only speak well of others.
- We smudge our whole being so we will portray only the good part of our self through our actions.

Smudging allows people to stop, slow down, become mindful and centered. This allows people to remember, connect and be grounded in the event, task or purpose at hand. Smudging also allows people to let go of something negative. Letting go of things that inhibit a person from being balanced and focused comes from the feeling of being calm and safe while smudging. The forms of smudging will vary from nation to nation but are considered by all to be a way of cleansing oneself. Smudging is part of “the way things are done” and is part of living a good life.

Smudging is always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that he/she does not want to smudge and that person may choose to stay in the room and refrain or leave the room during a smudge. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Aboriginal tradition.

Taken from the Aboriginal Education Directorate, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning

OPSEU's Aboriginal Circle assists in creating networks within the union. They work to develop and promote programs to encourage First Nation status and non-status, Métis and Inuit members to participate in union activities. They assist and support the grievance process, advocate, educate and lobby for Aboriginal issues in the workplace, among the membership and in the community. For more information check the OPSEU website under the Equity Information Section or contact the OPSEU Resource Centre at 1-800-268-7376.

Local Equity Committees

One way to advance equity in the local is to establish a local Equity Committee. The committee should have diverse representation from across the local and should represent the interests of equity-seeking groups including women, racialized workers, Aboriginal workers, young workers, LGBTTIAQQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, asexual, queer, questioning, two-spirited) workers, francophone workers, and workers with disabilities.)

The committee could deal with a wide scope of issues ranging from homophobia, discrimination, racism, pay equity, to reasonable accommodation in our workplaces. The committee could develop equity strategies and strive to break down systemic barriers in the union's own practices, policies, bylaws and structures in an effort to increase access and involvement by members at all levels of the union.

A Local Equity Committee could:

- Actively support the recruitment and development of new union leaders from equity seeking groups.
- Be actively involved in local equity issues, including being able to take decisive and positive action concerning human rights issues
- Promote and defend the principles of equity in the workplace and within the union
- Work within the union to build solidarity with equity seeking members
- Provide consultation to the Local Executive Committee (LEC), bargaining team and other local committees
- Liaise at all levels of the union
- Promote awareness and provide information regarding equity issues
- Identify, develop and recommend to the Local Executive Committee (LEC) and the bargaining team contract language concerning issues of equity.
- Organize and host equity events in the local, with other OPSEU locals (Area Councils) and Labour Councils in the community or region
- Attend, support and sponsor programs, conferences, seminars, workshops, etc., pertaining to issues of equity seeking groups
- Act as a support group
- Other

A Local Equity Committee would:

- Hold committee meetings on a regular basis
- Ensure that meeting notices, agendas and materials are posted in advance of meetings
- Maintain good communication with the local leadership and members about ongoing activities and ideas for potential equity activities
- Tell members about the work of the committee
- Present reports at general membership meetings on the work of the committee and equity activities that are happening
- Write up articles for the local newsletter, local website, Facebook page, Twitter, Instagram and other social media
- Play a key role in developing local leaders that more fully reflect the diversity of our membership

OPSEU Equity Unit

The Equity Unit advises OPSEU provincial and regional committees and caucuses on issues related to women, people with disabilities, workers of colour, Aboriginal workers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersexed, asexual, queer, questioning and two spirited (LGBTTIAQQ2S) workers, francophones and young workers. The Unit also provides strategic expertise and support to staff and individual members in relation to campaigns, grievances, mediations, harassment and discrimination complaints, policy initiatives and training related to human rights.

Our job as OPSEU members and activists is to promote and maintain our union's message around equity. The work of OPSEU's Equity Committees, Caucuses and the Unit provides a foundation for this work. However, to ensure that equity reaches every member and every workplace we need every member to be a champion for equity.

For Equity Information check out the OPSEU website at www.opseu.org or The Equity Unit can be contacted in confidence:

By email: equity@opseu.org

By phone: 416.443.8888 or 1.800.268.7376 ext. 8790

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the OPSEU website. The address bar shows the URL <http://www.opseu.org/information/equity-committees-and-caucu>. The page has a dark blue header with the OPSEU logo and navigation links: 'Join Us', 'About Us', 'News', 'Member Info', 'Events', and 'Contact Us'. A search icon and the word 'Français' are also visible. The main content area is titled 'Equity Information' and contains the following text:

OPSEU's Equity Unit
The Equity Unit advises OPSEU provincial and regional committees and caucuses on issues related to women, people with disabilities, workers of colour, Aboriginal workers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersexed, asexual, queer, questioning and two spirited (LGBTTIAQQ2S) workers, francophones and young workers. The Unit also provides strategic expertise and support to staff and individual members in relation to campaigns, grievances, mediations, harassment and discrimination complaints, policy initiatives and training related to human rights.

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You can find out more about our work, how to get involved and related resources below.






Contact the Equity Unit
The Equity Unit can be contacted in confidence at:

Email: equity@opseu.org

Phone: 416.443.8888 or 1.800.268.7376 ext. 8790

On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar titled 'On this page' with a list of links: OPSEU's Equity Unit, Contact the Equity Unit, Equity Committees and Caucuses, Religious Observances and Equity Calendars, Human Rights and Equity Calendar 2014, Human Rights Accommodation, OPSEU Accommodation Policy, OPSEU Accommodation Fund, Harassment and Discrimination Policies, and Case Law.

OPSEU Equity Committees and Caucuses

<p>Provincial Human Rights Committee</p> 	<p>Provincial Women's Committee</p> 
<p>Provincial Francophone Committee</p> 	<p>Aboriginal Circle</p> 
<p>Provincial Young Workers Committee</p> 	<p>Workers of Colour Caucus</p> 
<p>Rainbow Alliance</p> 	<p>Disability Rights Caucus</p> 

Aboriginal Circle Composition and General Information

The Aboriginal Circle first became a caucus in 2000. Twelve years later, the Circle put forward a motion for Committee status, which passed at Convention 2012. The Aboriginal Circle has 14 members, two from each region. The Circle meets several times a year, in locations across the province, in order to plan and carry out their activities. They also hold meetings at Convention.

The Aboriginal Circle self-identifies as Aboriginal OPSEU members. They assist in creating networks within OPSEU regions. They develop and promote programs to encourage First Nation status and non-status, Metis and Inuit members to participate in union activities. They assist and support the grievance process, advocate, educate and lobby for Aboriginal issues in the workplace, among the membership and in the community.

Aboriginal Circle meetings are conducted in a manner consistent with indigenous traditions. The group sits in a circle throughout the meeting. Meetings start with smudging (a ceremony involving the burning of traditional medicines such as sage or tobacco to cleanse and prepare the body and mind) and teaching from an Elder. All meetings are held over two days so that deliberation time for any major or challenging decisions can include a night's sleep.

The significance of the Aboriginal Circle logo design

(Source: "The Reason the OPSEU Aboriginal Circle Banner Looks as it Does")

Shape: The logo is a circle, which is very significant in the Aboriginal community. All sit together, no one shorter, no one taller, no one sitting in front and no one sitting behind anyone else. The circle is a symbol of the equality of everyone in the community – no one is greater than or less than anyone else.

Colours: The inside of the circle is split into quarters: white, black, red and yellow. These colours represent the four directions (north, east, south,

west), the four elements of life, the four seasons, four races of humanity, four stages of life (the good, the wondering, the responsibility and the wisdom), and the four quadrants that make us (mental, physical, emotional and spiritual). The green leafy border represents the vegetation that makes up the Earth Mother's dress.

Symbols: The three icons in the banner represent the three Aboriginal cultures in Canada: Inuit, First Nation, and Metis. The Inukshuk in the black quadrant represents the Inuit, the feather in the yellow quadrant represents the First Nations, and the infinity symbol in the red quadrant represents the Metis.

Significant Milestones and Work of the Aboriginal Circle

Smudging at OPSEU events

The Aboriginal Circle has introduced smudging at many OPSEU events (e.g. Convention and Equity conferences), as a way to welcome both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, and to acknowledge and show respect for the fact that we meet on the lands of the first inhabitants of Turtle Island. Over the years, the Aboriginal Circle has been instrumental in advocating for agreements with hotels and venues to accommodate smudging at events and conferences.

Aboriginal Issues regional education course

In 2014, the Aboriginal Circle identified an opportunity for education among the broader OPSEU membership on Aboriginal issues and culture. The Circle felt that this course would bring about greater understanding of indigenous issues, and further encourage Aboriginal members to get involved in the union. The Circle put a motion to the Executive Board requesting that a 1.5 day regional educational course be created. The course was developed and made available to the regions to run at their educational weekends in January 2015.

Support and awareness-raising of issues in the community

The Aboriginal Circle supports indigenous movements across the province and country, and raises awareness of them within OPSEU. These issues include:

- Sisters-in-Spirit, a project of the Native Women’s Association of Canada which advocates for awareness and action on “the alarmingly high rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada”.
- The Idle No More movement to raise awareness of indigenous land and sovereignty issues through social media, peaceful protest and education.
- Attawapiskat – The Circle stood in solidarity with Chief Theresa Spence during her hunger strike in 2012 to protest the terrible conditions on the Attawapiskat First Nation reserve.
- Advocating for a statutory holiday for June 21, National Aboriginal Day

Disability Rights Caucus Composition and General Information

The Disability Rights Caucus was formed in 2000. As a caucus, there is no set number of members per region, but the caucus does try to ensure representation from every region when possible. Vacancies on the Disability Rights Caucus are filled by a call-out, application and selection process run by the Caucus, with the assistance of the Equity Unit. The caucus meets several times per year in order to plan and carry out their activities. They also generally hold a meeting at Convention.

The Disability Rights Caucus is made up of OPSEU members who identify as people with disabilities. The mandate of the Caucus is to raise awareness and understanding of disability issues within the organization of OPSEU, in the workplace, and in the broader community. This includes visible and invisible, physical and mental disabilities.

Significant Milestones and Work of the Disability Rights Caucus

Accessible venues for OPSEU events

The Disability Rights Caucus has worked with OPSEU staff for years to raise and resolve issues of accessibility at OPSEU events such as Convention, regional educationals and meetings, and conferences. The Caucus has also provided feedback on the accessibility of OPSEU buildings and property. As a result of this advocacy and feedback, OPSEU now makes it a priority to ensure that venues where events are held meet strong accessibility standards, and that its buildings are also accessible. This work is never done; it is a continuous process of advocacy and feedback between the Caucus and the Union.

Accessible communication formats

The Disability Rights Caucus has championed issues of accessibility around communications formats. They have advocated for accessibility features such as large print documents made simultaneously available at

meetings, subtitles for videos, interpreters, accessible electronic documents that can be read by screen-readers, and individual accommodations customized as needed. The Disability Rights Caucus was also asked for their input into the accessibility features of the new website when OPSEU overhauled and redesigned it using a whole new system in 2013. This is also work that is always in progress; OPSEU and the Disability Rights Caucus continue to discuss ways to make it possible for everyone, regardless of ability, to have access to the same information and communications.

Support and awareness-raising of issues in the community

The Disability Rights Caucus also stands in solidarity with movements and organizations in broader society as well, and raises awareness with the OPSEU membership of the issues they champion. Some of these issues include:

- Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG), “a group of workers who have been injured or made sick on the job”, advocating for reform of the Workers’ Compensation Act. The Disability Rights Caucus encourages support and attendance at activities organized by ONIWG across the province, including protests, conferences, and educational events.
- Mad Pride/mental injury movements – the Disability Rights Caucus raises awareness about, and has organized and attended workshops on dealing with mental health and mental injury issues in the workplace and beyond. The Caucus encourages members to reach out to them to discuss their experiences with these issues.
- Commemoration of International Day for Persons with Disabilities: The Caucus highlights December 3rd annually in order to raise awareness within the OPSEU membership of disability rights issues, and to call on governments to make accommodation, disability issues, and compensation for workplace injuries a priority.

Provincial Francophone Committee Composition and General Information

The Provincial Francophone Committee started out as an Advisory Committee in the early 90's, and then became the Francophone Caucus in 2001. The caucus was recognized as a Committee by Convention 2011, and became operational after the regional elections of 2013. The Provincial Francophone Committee is made up of seven members, one from each region of the province, elected at Regional Meetings every second year. They meet several times a year in order to plan and carry out their activities.

The original mandate of the Francophone Advisory Committee in the 1990's was to advise the union on services to offer to OPSEU's Francophone members working within the newly organized Cité collégiale, Collège Boréal, and Collège des Grands Lacs. Since then, the Francophone Caucus, and now Committee, has added to its mandate empowering its members through education by developing and promoting programs that encourage Francophones to participate in union activities. The Committee aims to increase awareness and understanding of Francophone issues throughout the membership in all Francophone communities across the province. It also promotes the use of Canada's two official languages while respecting their linguistic and cultural differences. The Committee raises "French consciousness" among Francophone members.

Significant Milestones and Work of the Francophone Committee

2015 Francophone Conference

The Provincial Francophone Committee passed a resolution at Convention for the first OPSEU Francophone Conference to be held in 2015, and then held every other year after that. The Committee will use this biennial conference to reach out to Francophone members of OPSEU and bring them together to discuss issues of importance.

Translation of Materials and Communications

The Provincial Francophone Committee has been a champion since its inception as an advisory committee of ensuring that there are French translations of printed and electronic materials, and that there is French language interpretation available at events. The Francophone Committee has advocated the translation of as many educational materials as possible, and OPSEU is in the process of having all of its educational materials translated so that courses can be offered in French as well as English. The Committee has advocated for the hiring of additional translators in order to achieve this goal, and its advocacy succeeded when two translators were added to OPSEU staff. OPSEU has both an English and French website, and every effort is made to translate and make available online content in French as well as English.

Commemoration of International Francophonie Day and UN French Language Day

The Francophone Committee commemorates International Francophonie Day and UN French Language Day every March 20th. The Committee does this to encourage OPSEU members, Francophone and non-Francophone, to celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity and break down the barriers of communication to ensure that everyone can come together in solidarity as a team.

Francophone solidarity with Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel

After consultation with the Provincial Francophone Committee, and as an act of solidarity with OPSEU's francophone members, the Rainbow Alliance agreed to change the official name of their group to Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel, and to refer to their name as such whether they are communicating in English or French. (Arc-en-ciel means "Rainbow" in French.)

Provincial Human Rights Committee Composition and General Information

In 1986, OPSEU created the Race Relations and Minority Rights Committee, which is a precursor to the current Provincial Human Rights Committee (PHRC). The original committee was formed to advise the President and Board on policies to enhance and encourage human rights. This committee's mandate was to encourage locals to form their own human rights committees, which would provide confidential support to employees, offer education, and prepare contract language for bargaining to create joint programs to combat discrimination.

The original advisory committee got official constitutional committee status in 1992 and was renamed the Provincial Human Rights Committee. There are seven members of the committee, one member per region, and they are elected at the biennial regional elections. The PHRC continues its mandate to establish local human rights committees, develops and promotes programs that encourage all members to participate in union activities, and increases awareness and understanding of workplace, community, national and international human rights issues.

The PHRC focuses on the following strategic areas for education, collective bargaining, organizing and communications work:

- fighting anti-gay/anti-abortion movements
- decent pay for decent work, the importance of maintaining public services, and fighting for the working class
- combatting misconceptions about unions
- accommodation, accessibility and the importance of breaking down barriers
- environmental issues
- promoting employment equity and bringing greater awareness on the plight of migrant workers
- supporting Aboriginal communities

Significant Milestones and Work of the Provincial Human Rights Committee

(Source: OPSEU History document)

Early equity initiatives at OPSEU

In 1986, Convention ordered OPSEU to ensure that members from equity-seeking groups were represented at union educational sessions, and that members with disabilities were appropriately accommodated.

OPSEU Employment Equity policy

In 1991, OPSEU adopted an Employment Equity policy and became one of the first unions to hire a Human Rights Officer.

Biennial Human Rights Conference

Every other year, the PHRC hosts a Human Rights Conference that brings together members across the province to learn about and become active on human rights issues of the day.

Internal advocacy

The PHRC regularly engages in the following work:

- Identify and address needs within the membership on human rights
- Advising the Executive Board on policies and procedures that ensure equity and inclusiveness
- Advising the Executive Board on public policy trends, organizing and bargaining changes and issues, and current arbitration and legislative changes that involve human rights issues
- Developing resources that increase awareness of human rights issues
- Holding workshops, presentations, educationals, discussion forums, and information as requested by provincial, regional and local members
- Supporting the work of the other Provincial Committees and caucuses
- Using social media, email, educationals and publications (e.g. In Solidarity) to communicate with the membership about human rights issues

Provincial Women’s Committee Composition and General Information

The Provincial Women’s Committee (PWC) started out meeting informally as the Region 5 Women’s Caucus, made up of a group of OPSEU women activists in Toronto. In 1980, Convention established the Provincial Women’s Committee. The Committee has seven members, one from each region of the province, elected at the biennial regional elections.

The mandate of the Provincial Women’s Committee is to be an advocate for women within the union, especially at the local level. Some PWC members act as advisors, mediators and investigators under OPSEU’s Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy. The Committee also initiates campaigns in the workplace and community for women’s rights. They make themselves available to work with bargaining teams on contract language regarding equity issues.

Equality for women and other equity-seeking groups is a central thrust to all of their work, both in the workplace and their communities. They encourage each union local to set up an active women’s committee with a mandate to highlight issues of particular concern to female OPSEU members.

Significant Milestones and Work of the Provincial Women’s Committee

(Sources: OPSEU History document, PWC website)

Equal Opportunities Coordinator

In 1977, the Women’s Caucus convinced OPSEU to create an Equal Opportunities Coordinator, reporting directly to the president, and charged with promoting equity. OPSEU was the first Canadian union to create a position with a full-time mandate to ensure women’s needs were taken into account in all union decisions.

Child care during union meetings

In 1977-78, Convention approved paying for child care at all union meetings so that women with children would be able to participate.

Sexual Harassment in the Union

In 1979, the Women’s Caucus convinced Convention to outlaw sexual harassment throughout the union.

Biennial Women’s Conference

The first biennial Women’s Conference was held in 1982. Each Women’s Conference has a theme relevant to the current climate and issues of the day, and brings women from across the province to learn and strategize together through speakers and workshops.

Paid Parental Leave

As a result of OPSEU focusing on issues of importance to women, members of the Ontario Public Service and college faculty achieved paid parental leave in 1982.

Universal Child Care

The PWC works with the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare to advocate for universally accessible, high-quality, not-for-profit, regulated child care in Ontario

Pay Equity

The Provincial Women’s Committee has had an ongoing campaign for equal pay for many years, up to the present day. They have created flyers and posters and post regular updates online, encouraging OPSEU members and the general public to support the principles of pay equity.

International Women’s Day

Every March, the Provincial Women’s Committee hosts, attends, supports, and encourages OPSEU women to attend International Women’s Day events across the province. International Women’s Day raises awareness of issues

Provincial Young Workers Committee Composition and General Information

In 2004, the Youth Caucus was formed. This caucus was granted committee status by Convention in 2007 and became the Provincial Young Workers Committee (PYC). The Committee is composed of seven members, one from each OPSEU region, elected every two years at the biennial regional elections.

The mandate of the Provincial Young Workers Committee is to promote young worker involvement in the union and to advocate and educate around young workers' issues. Their work focuses on:

- Increasing awareness on key young worker issues such as environmental sustainability, international fair trade, part-time issues and job security
- Building young workers' participation and activism inside and outside of the union
- Mobilizing and educating at the regional level.
- Inclusion and succession-planning in the union

The committee is dedicated to bringing new ideas, energy and activism to OPSEU. Their goal is to promote, educate, motivate, mobilize and empower young workers whenever and wherever possible.

Significant Milestones and Work of the Provincial Young Workers Committee

Killer Coke resolution

At the 2009 Convention, the Provincial Young Workers Committee put forward a resolution supporting the international Campaign to Stop Killer Coke. This campaign highlighted the violence and killing of trade unionists who work for Coca-Cola bottlers in those countries. The resolution from the PYC was to boycott all Coca-Cola products at all OPSEU events, locally, regionally and provincially. The resolution passed, and the No-Coke policy stands to this day.

Annual International Youth Day Conference

Each year, the Provincial Youth Committee holds an International Youth Day conference, on or near August 12. The conference brings OPSEU young workers together from across the province to learn and strategize about how to address issues of the day for young workers. These conferences generally have a combination of speakers, discussions, workshops, and an opportunity for young workers to plan activist work together.

Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel

Composition and General Information

The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel was formed as a caucus within OPSEU in 1982. As a caucus, there is no set number of members per region, but the caucus does try to ensure representation from every region when possible. Vacancies on the Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel are filled by a call-out, application and selection process run by the Caucus, with the assistance of the Equity Unit. The caucus meets several times per year in order to plan and carry out their activities.

The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel is made up of OPSEU members who identify LGBTTIAQQ2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Intersex, Asexual, Queer, Questioning, and Two-Spirited).

The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel provides representation and support to LGBTTIAQQ2S members of OPSEU. They promote equality and a harassment-free work environment. Tackling discrimination in the workplace means addressing and tackling discrimination in our communities, unions and homes. The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel's mandate is to do the following:

- Promote LGBTTIAQQ2S involvement and leadership in the union
- Advocate and educate around our members' issues within the union
- Create a safe space to share our experiences, knowledge and expertise
- Promote OPSEU's name in our communities through Pride and solidarity work

Significant Milestones and Work of the Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel

Pride

Every year, the Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel participates in and promotes Pride celebrations across the province. In 2014, World Pride was held in

Toronto, and the Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel organized a number of events that took place throughout the entire World Pride week. The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel encourages all OPSEU members to get involved in Pride celebrations wherever they are held.

International Day of Pink

The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel encourages members to commemorate the Day of Pink, a day on which supporters wear pink clothing in order to raise awareness of homophobia and transphobia, and stand up against bullying.

Safe Schools Campaign

The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel supports Egale Canada's Safe Schools campaign by promoting it to OPSEU members and encouraging them to get involved.

Eldercare Campaign

The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel raises awareness among OPSEU members of the distinct issues that older LGBTTTIAQQ2S people face in social areas such as services, health care and institutions. These issues have been identified by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in a report that the Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel has posted online.

Gender Variance and Trans Issues

The Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel has noted that a lot of issues around gender variance are surfacing over time. People who are transitioning have a lot of issues in the workplace and within the union movement. The Alliance sees this as a strong area of focus for the caucus for the foreseeable future.

Solidarity with francophone members and the Provincial Francophone Committee

After consultation with the Provincial Francophone Committee, and as an act of solidarity with OPSEU's francophone members, the Rainbow Alliance agreed to change the official name of their group to Rainbow Alliance arc-

en-ciel, and to refer to their name as such whether they are communicating in English or French. (Arc-en-ciel means “Rainbow” in French.)

Workers of Colour Caucus

Composition and General Information

The Workers of Colour Caucus was formed in 2003. As a caucus, there is no set number of members per region, but the caucus does try to ensure representation from every region when possible. Vacancies on the Workers of Colour Caucus are filled by a call-out, application and selection process run by the Caucus, with the assistance of the Equity Unit. The caucus meets several times per year in order to plan and carry out their activities.

The Workers of Colour Caucus was founded upon the desire to recognize the changing demographics in Ontario, and to promote the activities and contributions of OPSEU's members of colour. The caucus strives to secure OPSEU's future in the labour movement by embracing this change through organizing, educating and empowering workers of colour to fully participate in the union. The Caucus provides support and advocates on behalf of racialized members of OPSEU and external communities of colour. The Caucus has also had a significant role in researching and identifying issues related to the changing demographics of OPSEU and within the labour movement.

Significant Milestones and Work of the Workers of Colour Caucus

The Living Wall and the Social Mapping Project

For five years, the Workers of Colour Caucus tracked the participation and involvement of racialized members at Convention through the Living Wall project. This project pre-dated, and led to, the development of the OPSEU Social Mapping Project (SMP) in 2010. The Workers of Colour Caucus were instrumental in lobbying for the more extensive Social Mapping Project, which continues to the present. The Social Mapping Project is a multi-phase project which started with a demographic survey of the membership and continued with recommendations for ensuring that

OPSEU has systems in place to welcome participation from all equity-seeking groups within OPSEU.

Pride

Each year, the Caucus hosts a Pride breakfast in Toronto before the parade.

Regional Caucuses

The Workers of Colour Caucus has encouraged each region to set up a regional caucus in order to plan and promote events regionally and locally. Region 5 has set up a regional caucus with the support of the Workers of Colour Caucus.

Caribana

The Workers of Colour Caucus have participated every year in Toronto's Caribana festival, as well as other Caribbean carnival festivals in other areas of the province.

Live and Let Live Fund

The Caucus raises funds for OPSEU's Live and Let Live fund (a charity that assists people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa and Ontario) at various Workers of Colour Caucus events.

OPSEU Convention Caucus

Each year, the Workers of Colour have a caucus meeting at Convention to encourage new members to get involved in their regions. The caucus also provides a safe place for members of colour to discuss concerns and issues.

Black History Month and other commemoration days

Every February, the Workers of Colour Caucus promotes Black History Month through publicity materials (building banners and posters), events across the province, and online information about the significant contribution of Black Canadians. The Caucus also releases statements to raise awareness among OPSEU members of annual commemoration days such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and the International Day for the Elimination of Racism.

International Solidarity

The Workers of Colour Caucus supports international solidarity efforts by financially supporting the family of a South African worker, participating in OPSEU’s International Solidarity Leadership Tours and raising funds.

Colouring Our Path Biographies

“Colouring Our Path” is a biographical project that documents the contributions of workers of colour at OPSEU. It raises awareness of the history and contributions of workers of colour to the labour movement and human rights generally.

