

TAKING ACTION ON RACISM: LOCAL LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS



Racial Disparity and Local Leadership

Racialized and Indigenous members are under-represented in leadership positions.

It is important for BIPOC people (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) to be represented and included in Local leadership positions because:

- The union is stronger when it represents the full diversity of the membership.
- Inclusion is a matter of solidarity: we are stronger together.



Racial Disparity and Local Leadership

OPSEU social mapping statistics show:

Racialized and Indigenous members are under-represented in our union leadership at all levels and within all sectors.

“...the differences between proportions of racialized and non-racialized respondents are relatively small among Stewards but noticeably larger among local executives, committees and Divisional/Provincial executive levels.”

OPSEU Social Mapping Report, 2020



Inclusive Local Leadership

What does inclusive local leadership look like?

- Working to eliminate systemic racism from our union.
- Ensuring there is inclusive leadership that reflects the full diversity of the local membership.



Social Mapping Recommendations

The OPSEU Social Mapping 2020 Report includes the following two recommendations regarding equitable elections:

Recommendation #48:

Recommendation: Introduce policies to provide for equitable opportunities for election success.



Social Mapping Recommendations

Recommendation #48 Suggested Approach:

Our review lacks the specialized understanding of OPSEU election dynamics that would lead to specific suggestions. We recommend that OPSEU establish a task force of Equity Committee / Caucus representatives to identify and prioritize appropriate changes that would help to 'level the playing field' for candidates.



Social Mapping Recommendations

Recommendation #48 outcomes might include, for example:

- Provide greater support to candidates (such as paid time off, expense coverage, childcare) to have more equitable access to debates, Q&A sessions, etc.
- Have OPSEU Communications Unit support locals / sectors in using social media, the OPSEU or local websites, video libraries, short podcasts, etc. to raise the visibility of new candidates seeking election.
- Place upper limits on candidate spending, and audit compliance.



Social Mapping Recommendations

Social Mapping Report Recommendation #49:

Implement a measurement process to monitor and report on the demographic representation among voting members, delegates, candidates and elected members in the election process.



Social Mapping Recommendations

Recommendation #49 Suggested Approach:

Ongoing data collection at various points in the election process can be very helpful. This should include not only demographics of those who participate, but also attitudinal data broken down by demographic characteristics.

A working committee should create a basic questionnaire that would be distributed during election processes at all levels. Locals should report the self-identified demographics of the candidates (successful and unsuccessful). An OPSEU administrative unit could compile the results for reporting to the Board and Convention.



Inclusive Local Leadership

Question:

Think about the leadership of your Local, including your Local President, Vice-President, Chief Steward, Treasurer, Members at Large, Stewards.

Does your Local leadership include Black people? Indigenous people? People of colour?



Systemic Barriers

What are systemic barriers to BIPOC leadership?

Identify barriers by speaking with BIPOC activists who are already engaged.

Engagement is key to forming leaders.



Challenging the Norm

A culture where whiteness is the standard is at the foundation of our societal systems and institutions, including unions.

- Union leadership is largely white.
- This culture creates presumptions that white members are more qualified and effective leaders.



Challenging the Norm

White people must get used to having conversations that challenge whiteness as the standard at the Local level, even when it is uncomfortable. This is essential to moving forward with a truly diverse leadership.



Creating Opportunities

Question:

How do we create opportunities for BIPOC leadership?

Should your Local have designated equity seats on the Local Executive Committee (LEC)?

Take a moment to think about the pros and cons of having designated equity seats?



Local Structures and Processes

Create inclusive local structures and processes.

What you can do:

- Ensure all members are able to attend local meetings, especially when there is an election.
- Be flexible regarding scheduling to help ensure all members are able to be engaged.



Local Structures and Processes

Access to technology can be a barrier.

What your local can do:

- Be sure to use a variety of forms of communication, including union boards, face-to-face engagement and printed newsletters, to ensure all members are engaged.



Local Structures and Processes

Create local structures and processes that invite diverse leadership.

What the Local can do:

- Ensure there is more than one BIPOC person in the Local leadership.
- Support and help create spaces for BIPOC leaders.



Local Structures and Processes

Members have a different understanding of unions and the labour movement depending on their cultural background.

What the Local can do:

- Take cultural differences into consideration.
- Listen to the members and meet them where they are at.



Actions for Locals

- Make diversity a strategic priority
- Create spaces for and support existing BIPOC leaders
- Ensure elections are accessible to all members
- Identify who is at the table and who is not
- Get out of your comfort zone



Actions for Locals

- Support, create spaces and encourage diverse leadership candidates
- Start a BIPOC committee at your Local
- Reach out to the OPSEU Equity Unit, Coalition of Racialized Workers, and Indigenous Circle for support



Feedback

We hope you have found this session meaningful.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to send us an email at education@opseu.org





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