

# AGENDA



**EQUITY  
MATTERS**

**HEU EQUITY CONFERENCE**  
March 1-3, 2022

# HEU'S EQUITY STANDING COMMITTEES

HEU's Equity Standing Committees work toward ending discrimination and unfair treatment in all its forms – both in the workplace and in society. In 1996, HEU established four equity standing committees at convention to recognize the diversity of our membership and to help end discrimination. Two additional committees were established in 2008 and in 2021.



The **ETHNIC DIVERSITY** Standing Committee's mandate is to address issues of racism, discrimination and harassment in the workplace as well as locally, nationally and internationally. They promote and defend the rights of workers of colour, and challenge legislation that threatens these rights. The committee also works in solidarity with other unions, social justice groups and organizations to help end oppression and inequality.

The **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES** Standing Committee's purpose is to educate HEU members on Indigenous issues to: promote equality, promote better working conditions for Indigenous peoples within the union, defend the rights of all Indigenous workers, and recognize and respect all Indigenous cultural teachings. They educate others by breaking down myths and misinformation on housing, education, taxes, land claims, and other Indigenous issues.

The **PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** Standing Committee's mandate is to defend the rights and improve the working conditions for persons with disabilities, promote and demystify the reality of persons with disabilities among workers and employers, and to educate HEU members about the barriers faced by persons with disabilities. They actively participate in coalitions, lobbies and other political or organizing activities to create awareness and address critical issues.

The **PINK TRIANGLE** Standing Committee's goals are to enhance awareness and defend the rights and freedoms of lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary, transgender and transsexual persons; and to improve working conditions for LGBTQ2S+ persons in our union, workplaces and communities. They also work to eliminate homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia and genderism wherever they exist, and provide support to guarantee HEU members a safe, positive and harassment-free workplace.

The **2-SPIRITED, WOMEN & NON-BINARY** Standing Committee's name was changed from the Women's Standing Committee at HEU's 31st biennial convention in 2021. They work with grassroots feminist organizations, community coalitions, and other trade union committees dedicated to social and economic equality, and the advancement of women and gender rights. The committee actively participates in a number of campaigns and events to promote equality for women, 2-spirited, and non-binary people, including affordable child care and the Red Dress Campaign. They also volunteer their time to provide support and resources to women on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The **YOUNG WORKERS'** Standing Committee engages with young workers (aged 33 and under) to revitalize the union; raise awareness among all HEU members of youth issues; educate non-union and unemployed youth about the labour movement, social justice issues, and their rights; and identify and develop action plans on issues affecting young workers. The Young Workers' Standing Committee was formerly a Provincial Executive subcommittee, and was established as an equity standing committee at HEU's 31st biennial convention in 2021.

\*new logo coming



## EQUITY CONFERENCE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Members learn about equity, human rights and social justice, making links to their own lives.
- Members learn about community organizing projects that work to achieve diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Members are empowered to take action in their own workplaces or communities on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Members vote to elect some positions on HEU equity standing committees.



## PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

- One speaker at a time
- Share speaking time
- Listen for understanding and insights
- All questions are important
- Limit and turn off distractions such as cell phones and notifications
- Enjoy your time together and have fun!

# AGENDA

## DAY ONE

9:00 a.m.

### MORNING PLENARY

- Indigenous welcome | [Rebecca Duncan](#)
- Equity Statement | [Betty Valenzuela](#)
- Ombudsperson | [Mary-Ann Johnson](#)
- President's address | [Barb Nederpel](#)
- Agenda overview & icebreaker | [Sharryn Modder & Kyra Sekhon](#)
- Secretary-Business Manager's address | [Meena Brisard](#)
- Music performance | [Kym Gouchie](#)

10:20 a.m.

### BREAK

10:35 a.m.

### MORNING PLENARY continued

- Technology orientation
- DEI Overview: Phase 1, Phase 2 | [Barb Nederpel & Natasha Tony](#)
- Sowing seeds presentation | [Cease Wyss](#)

11:30 a.m.

### LUNCH

12:30 p.m.

### AFTERNOON SESSION

- Equity Caucuses
- Large Plenary

1:30 p.m.

### WORKSHOPS (pick one, see below for details)

- Disability Justice | [Gabrielle Peters, Disability Activist](#)
- Mental Health Tools | [Laura Faccione & Anne Bull, HEU OH&S Reps](#)
- Organizing with a Racial Justice Lens | [Deena Ladd, Toronto Workers' Action Centre](#)
- Intro to Equity | [Sharryn Modder, HEU Equity Officer](#)
- Sing & Lift Our Voices Together | [Khari Wendell-McClelland, Artist](#)
- Recognizing Personal Leadership | [Nadine Nakagawa, New Westminster City Councillor, Feminist Campaign School](#)
- Arts for Climate Change | [Emily Thiesen, Artist](#)

2:15 p.m.

### BREAK

2:45 p.m.

### AFTERNOON SESSION continued

- Update from BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner | [Kasari Govendar, BC Officer of Human Rights](#)
- Review Election Procedures | [Barb Nederpel & Sharryn Modder](#)

3:10 p.m.

### AFFINITY GROUP SPACES (see below for details)

- Women of Colour | [Carolyn Unsworth & Krya Sekhon, HEU Reps](#)
- Indigenous Women | [Kim Haxton, Facilitator & Bobbie Poitras, HEU Rep](#)
- Trans and/or Non-Binary | [Adrienne Smith, Human Rights Activist](#)

4:00 p.m.

### ADJOURN

## TUES, MARCH 1

## DAY TWO

9:00 a.m.

## WED, MARCH 2

### MORNING PLENARY

- Music performance | [Ndidi Cascade](#)
- Solidarity greetings | [Gina McKay, CUPE Manitoba President](#)
- DEI Discussion: Going Deeper | [Meena Brisard, Natasha Tony & Sharryn Modder](#)

10:00 a.m.

### BREAK

10:15 a.m.

### EQUITY CAUCUSES

12:00 p.m.

### LUNCH

1:00 p.m.

### EQUITY CAUCUSES continued

- Election of Committees

2:15 p.m.

### BREAK

2:30 p.m.

### EQUITY CAUCUSES continued

- Election of Committees continued

4:00 p.m.

### ADJOURN

## DAY THREE

9:00 a.m.

## THURS, MARCH 3

### MORNING PLENARY

- Introduction of New Committee Members | [Barb Nederpel](#)
- Overview of government anti-racism initiatives | [Rachna Singh, BC NDP MLA & Paliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives](#)
- Music Performance | [Kimmortal](#)
- Ally Workshop

10:30 a.m.

### BREAK

10:45 a.m.

### MORNING PLENARY continued

- Financial-Secretary's address | [Betty Valenzuela](#)
- Keynote with Q&A | [Dr. Evan Adams, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Public Health](#)
- Music Performance | [Dawn Pemberton](#)
- Evaluations & Closing

12:30 p.m.

### ADJOURN

## AGENDA DETAILS

### WORKSHOPS

On March 1 all participants will attend a 45-minute workshop hosted by knowledgeable and passionate speakers, facilitators and artists. Please fill out the online form ([link below](#)) to select your workshop choices.

### AFFINITY SPACES

An "affinity space" is for members with common identities to gather together. We are offering affinity spaces at the 2022 Equity Conference because we know that equity-seeking members have many parts to their identities.

For example, a racialized woman who has an invisible disability might want to attend the women's caucus, the ethnic diversity caucus or the people with disabilities caucus, but due to the structure of the equity committees, she must choose one.

We hope by offering this time, members with intersectional identities can share experiences in a safer space, and offer mutual support that we hope carries into the rest of the Equity Conference and beyond.

The affinity space discussions will be guided by a facilitator who shares the identity of those meeting

together. We have already arranged for three affinity spaces.

If you would like to see an affinity space that's not listed above, please fill out the online form ([link next column](#)) by February 18, 2022. We will do our best to accommodate these requests as capacity allows.

### SIGN UP

To sign up for workshops and/or affinity spaces, please fill out this online form: <https://forms.gle/sSKeZJemZQPYqag3A>



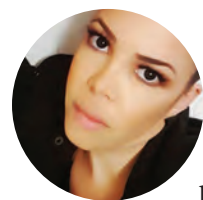
## SPEAKER BIOS



**DR. EVAN TLESLA II ADAMS** is a Coast Salish actor and physician from the Tla'amin First Nation near Powell River. He stars in Miramax's *Smoke Signals*, and has several TV and film credits. Aside from his entertainment career, Evan has completed a Medical Doctorate from the University of Calgary, and a residency in the Aboriginal Family Practice program at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. Evan has a Masters of Public Health from Johns Hopkins University, and was the first Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor in the B.C. Ministry of Health. He's currently on exchange with the First Nations & Inuit Health Branch of Indigenous Services Canada, as the Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Public Health.



**MEENA BRISARD** is HEU's secretary-business manager, and the chief negotiator and spokesperson for the Facilities Bargaining Association. Raised in Mission by immigrant parents who worked union jobs, Meena learned about trade unionism at a young age. For 20 years, Meena was on staff with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and since 2014, she was a member of CUPE's senior management team. In 2018, Meena was appointed as CUPE's regional director in B.C., where she was responsible for managing CUPE National's operations in the province. This included managing national staff, and overseeing all major negotiations, litigations, labour relations and human resources matters. She joined HEU in 2021.



**NDIDI CASCADE**, who is of Nigerian-Italian-Irish-Canadian heritage, is a popular Vancouver hip-hop vocalist. Also

a songwriter, recording artist, educator and program facilitator, Ndidi has showcased her music across North America and internationally. Ndidi also facilitates and manages programs that use hip-hop, spoken word and dance as a medium for healthy self-expression. Ndidi is the founder of the Word, Sound & Power and Elementalz education programs, which are designed to raise awareness of the origins of the hip-hop movement. She is also a World Music Education independent school teacher, and currently tours with her group Metaphor, showcasing interactive hip-hop shows in elementary and high schools around BC.



**REBECCA DUNCAN** is from the Squamish and Musqueam First Nations of the Coast Salish Peoples. She has devoted her life to preserve the Squamish language, along with her cultural teachings that have been handed down to her from her late-Papa and his Papa and so on and so on since the beginning of time. Rebecca is a remarkable storyteller, singer, dancer, weaver, traditional cook, and language teacher. She says, "No matter where you are from, it is so important to know your history, your ties to the land, and your culture. Welcome to unceded Coast Salish Territory. Our history is your history."



With ancestral roots in the Lheidli T'enneh, Cree and Secwépemc Nations, **KYM GOUCHIE** is fostering change through her music and art. Her music brings awareness to First Nations' and women's issues, promoting reconciliation and community-building while reminding us that we are all in this together. Her stories are a testament to the human spirit, weaving together threads of her own journey from personal tragedy to triumph.

Kym's traditional hand drum, clean, crisp acoustic guitar, and full-bodied voice make her a powerful artist. A respected Elder-in-training of the Lheidli T'enneh Nation, also known as Prince George, Kym is sought after to perform and speak at traditional welcoming ceremonies, cultural gatherings, schools and conferences.



**KASARI GOVENDER** took office as B.C.'s first independent Human Rights Commissioner in 2019. Her role is to lead the promotion and protection of human rights in British Columbia through the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. As a lawyer and community builder, she has worked closely with organizations and communities promoting gender equality, Indigenous rights, children's rights, the rights of people with disabilities, and the rights of immigrant communities. From 2008 until 2019, Kasari held leadership positions at West Coast LEAF and was appointed Executive Director in 2011. She has co-authored key reports and articles, and speaks widely on crucial social issues such as hate speech, access to justice, gender-based violence, and systemic racism. Her earlier work includes a pivotal role in establishing the Rise Women's Legal Centre, a non-profit legal clinic in British Columbia.



**KIM HAXTON** (Pottowatomi) is from the Wasauksing First Nation in Ontario. Kim has developed and facilitated programs in more than eight countries, and has been working in land-based education and leadership for the past 26 years, including as co-founder of Indigeneyez. She takes her place among "thought leaders" in the area of decolonization, particularly as it applies to language, art, econom-

ics and gender. She encourages the "lateral liberation" of consciousness by drawing from the embodied knowledge of Indigenous peoples. In workshops, Kim moves people through a personal process of questioning what is the truth, and what is simply constructed – effectively rupturing what we "know". True expression of respect, harmony, inclusion and equity can come from this place.



**KIMMORTAL** (they/them/theirs) is a queer non-binary filipinx artist and rapper known for their powerful stage presence and multi-dimensional approach to music. Based in Vancouver, BC on the unceded Coast Salish territories, Kimmortal's alt-rap/soul electronic album "X marks the Swirl" incorporates spoken word, rap, and field recordings of water that Kim created over a five year process. The album was longlisted for a Polaris, recognized as top 19 albums of 2019 via CBC, and nominated in the 2020 "Hip Hop and Rap" category of Breakout West Music Awards. Kimmortal's newest projects are set to be released in 2022.



For the past 30 years, **DEENA LADD** has been working to improve wages and working conditions in sectors that are dominated by low-wages, violations of rights, and precarious and temporary work. She has worked to support and develop grassroots training, education and organizing with groups such as the Fight for \$15 and Fairness Campaign, Justice for Workers Campaign, Decent Work and Health Network, and the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change. Deena is one of the founders and the Executive Director of the Toronto Workers' Action Centre. The Centre organizes to improve wages and working conditions

for low-waged workers, women, racialized and immigrant workers in precarious jobs who face discrimination in the workplace.



Imaginative. Bold. Genuine. Hopeful. **KHARI WENDELL MCCLELLAND** is an award-winning musician and creative facilitator who uses the arts and experiential activities for transformational learning. Based in Vancouver, Khari has worked with communities across Africa, Australia, Europe, North America, and the Caribbean. In a world with increasingly complex societal challenges, the need for values-based creative solutions is paramount. Khari helps youth and adults explore core values and creativity as a means to self-actualization, community-building, and problem-solving. His approach is warm, insightful and engaging. For Khari's music, visit [khariwendellmcclelland.com](http://khariwendellmcclelland.com)



**GINA MCKAY** is a Queer, Métis, feminist, labour movement activist and facilitator engaged in the regional, national and international labour movement. She is a proud working member on numerous equity and human rights committees with CUPE, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the Manitoba Federation of Labour, and the Winnipeg Labour Council. In 2021, Gina was elected as Equity Vice-President: LGBTQ2SI+ at the CLC's National Convention. And in October 2021, was elected president of CUPE Manitoba. During the day, Gina is the Labour Director at United Way Winnipeg on Treaty 1, in Manitoba, and an active Local 2348 executive member in the largest social service sector composite locals in Western Canada.



**NADINE NAKAGAWA** is a community organizer, New Westminster city councillor, and local activist, who has worked on issues relating to public health, housing, public spaces, reconciliation, public engagement, and child care. She is the chair of the Reconciliation, Social Inclusion and Engagement Task Force, and chair of the Environment and Climate Advisory Committee. Nadine is also the co-founder of The Feminist Campaign School. For her work in the community, Nadine was named the 2017 Citizen of the Year at the Chamber of Commerce Platinum Awards. She works in the non-profit sector and has a Masters Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus on communication and leadership.



A clerk/care aide from the Kamloops/Thompson local, **BARB NEDERPEL** was elected HEU's first woman president in 2018. An HEU member since 2006, when she worked as a licensed practical nurse, Barb was first elected to the Provincial Executive in 2012 as regional vice-president (Interior), then elected 2nd vice-president in 2014, and 1st vice-president in 2016. She served on the 2012 FBA bargaining committee, and has held various positions on her local executive, including chief shop steward and chair. Barb has also served on CUPE and B.C. Federation of Labour political action committees. As HEU president, Barb represents the union as a BCFED officer and a CUPE National Executive Board member.



**DAWN PEMBERTON** has deep musical roots that take her powerful voice from gospel and soul, to

jazz, funk and world music. She has become a staple of the Vancouver music scene and can often be found tearin' it up as a vocalist, pianist, teacher, adjudicator, choir director and "go-to girl" for live performances and studio sessions. Dawn is currently hosting her own funk, soul and R&B show called "Get on The Good Foot" on CKUA. She has toured extensively throughout Canada and Europe. Her debut solo album Say Somethin' won Best Urban Recording at the 2015 Western Canadian Music Awards. Dawn is the founder and Artistic Director of Roots 'N' Wings Women's Choir, and teaches masterclasses and workshops all over North America.



**GABRIELLE PETERS** is a disabled writer, policy analyst and a commissioner on the Vancouver City Planning Commission. She provides deep analysis of disability history and policy, including the negative impacts of neoliberalism and privatization on disabled people in Canada. She is co-founder of Dignity Denied and the Disability Filibuster. Her work includes the further development of the radical theory of accessibility by integrating the lessons of disability justice, harm reduction, trauma-informed practice, and grassroots community development and change activism. Gabrielle's lived expertise and acquired knowledge includes being a tenant of social housing, and transitioning to falling outside society's definition of a "human" as a fat, poor, wheelchair-user with chronic illness.



**RACHNA SINGH** was elected as the BC NDP MLA for Surrey-Green Timbers in May 2017, and re-elected in October 2020. She is the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives. Rachna moved from India to Canada in 2001, and chose Surrey to build a better life for her

young family. She has worked as a drug and alcohol counsellor, a support worker for women facing domestic violence, and a community activist. Rachna is married to radio journalist Gurpreet Singh, and they have two children.



**ADRIENNE SMITH** is a transgender human rights activist and social justice lawyer. They recently argued a B.C. human rights case which clarified employers' obligations to recognize correct pronouns for transgender and non-binary workers. Adrienne appeared at the B.C. Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada, where they argued about the harmful effects of mandatory minimum sentences for women, Indigenous people, and drug-users. As a trade union activist, they advocate for transgender inclusion in our unions and workplaces. Adrienne volunteers at the Catherine White Holman Wellness Clinic, where they give free legal advice, take on human rights cases, and notarize name change documents for trans people.



**EMILY THIESSEN** is an artist and climate justice organizer currently living in Courtenay on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. In 2018, she graduated with a BA in Anthropology from the University of Victoria, where she explored ethnographic comics, drawing and film. Now, Emily creates visuals for community organizations, mostly working on projects related to social and environmental justice.



**NATASHA TONY** is an acclaimed trainer, consultant, and leadership coach who has advanced the discussion on justice, equity, diversity

and inclusion (JEDI) nationally and internationally. Prior to establishing Elevate Inclusion Strategies, Natasha worked as a union representative specializing in labour relations. Natasha is a graduate of the Labour Relations certificate program at Queen's University, and rounded out her education in mediation, negotiation and coaching at the Justice Institute of British Columbia.



In 2018, **BETTY VALENZUELA** was elected HEU's first woman of colour to hold the financial secretary position. A health records clerk from the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) local, Betty has been an activist at her work site for many years. An HEU member since 1995, Betty was first elected to the Provincial Executive as senior trustee in 2014 for a four-year term. A long-time secretary-treasurer at the VGH local, Betty has also served on a number of union committees, including HEU and CUPE global justice and peace committees. She has also worked as a facilitator for table officers' training and on HEU's bursary committee. In 2007, Betty served her local as a full-time shop steward, up until her election as HEU's financial secretary.



**T'UY'T'TANAT-CEASE WYSS** is an artist, ethno-botanist, educator and activist of Skwxwú7mesh, Stó:lō, Hawaiian and Swiss descent with a practice of more than 30 years. She is a producer at Ceasefire Productions, where she also mentors in media production and technologies, post-production, Indigenous plants and their uses – both for food as well as medicine. Cease Wyss also specializes in urban and rural agriculture, Indigenous food systems, media literacy, traditional Indigenous knowledge, sustainable living in contemporary times, youth empowerment, and Elder empowerment.