



Toronto Racialized Members Committee Newsletter

We are back with our second edition of the Toronto Racialized Members Committee Newsletter! We hope that you have enjoyed reading each edition. We want the content to bring you value and insight, so, if you have ideas, suggestions, or topics you'd like us to cover, we'd love to hear from you! [Contact us](#)



Welcome Aswani Cherukuri!

On June 26, Aswani Cherukuri was acclaimed as Secretary of the Racialized Members Committee. Aswani strongly advocates for equity and inclusion and fights for REAL reconciliation.

Please join us in congratulating Aswani!

In this edition:

[Indigenous and Workers of Colour Conference 2025](#)

The TRMC sponsored the attendance of two PSAC members. Read about their experiences

[Juneteenth](#)

A brief recap of the TRMC's in-person, Juneteenth celebration

[Chinese Head Tax & Exclusion Act Redress Day](#)

[Emancipation Day](#)

Save the Date!

July 21st – Deadline to enter raffle for Panorama and Toronto Carnival Tickets (Draw takes place July 22nd)

August 27th – Labour Day Sign Making Event (PSAC Office)

September 1st – Labour Day Parade

September 18th – Toronto Racialized Members Committee Meeting (Virtual – 6:30 p.m.)

In preparation for the 2026 Racialized Members' Regional Conference, we want to know what are the top 5 issues of concern for you as Black and Racialized union members and what are the top 5 supports, tools and/or resources needed to help with your union activism (other than money)? Email Nicole Wall, PSAC Regional Representative – walln@psac-afpc.com with your thoughts before July 31, 2026.

Indigenous and Workers of Colour Conference 2025

Thank you for letting me attend this event on behalf of PSAC. This was my first event meeting other union members outside of PSAC. I feel grateful for connecting with other community and union leaders who are progressing equity goals within the labour movement.

At the Indigenous and Workers of Colour Conference (IWOC) this year, I found the Toronto & York Region Labour Council to be very inclusive for hosting this type of event.

At IWOC this year, I learned in a workshop how Toronto had one of the largest rent strikes in 2023. This was due to the organizing of grassroots tenant associations. The rent strike resulted in a favourable settlement for tenants who were being overcharged for their rent.

After attending IWOC, I think we, as a union, would grow from inviting Sharlene Henry from the York and South West Tenant Union, as well as hold space for local artists, such as the Filipino Tita Collective to come share with our Committee.

I believe the following actions will be helpful to further our union equity goals:

- holding a mentorship or sponsorship program for Equity deserving members
- partnering and supporting community organizations that focus on climate, social, racial and economic justice
- funding more members to go to similar events hosted by the Labour Council

Thank you,
Michelle Tsang

Indigenous and Workers of Colour Conference 2025

LABOUR TORONTO & YORK REGION COUNCIL

A NEW ERA FOR THE WORKING CLASS:
BEING BIPOC IN THESE DAMN HISTORIC TIMES

* June 7th, 2025
* 8:30AM registration, 9:30AM conference
* 155 Lesmill Rd
* \$95 per registrant

Register here:



The 2025 IWOC Conference was an exceptionally powerful, enlightening, and rich gathering that addressed the struggles, achievements, and ongoing resistance of Black, Indigenous and Racialized communities.

It provided a space where our perspectives were recognized, valued, and amplified, shedding light on the persistent effects of racism, colonialism, and inequality in health care, politics, education, employment, and many other sectors.

Hats off to the organizers, facilitators, and co-chairs for their careful attention to making sure everyone's needs were met, and creating a safe and empowering space for all.

The speakers challenged us to view policy, organizing, and culture as deeply interconnected components of liberation and progress — from passionate advocates like Cris, Adria, Doly, Marc, Syed and Sultana who reminded us that the fight for justice is ongoing and multi-layered. "I connected profoundly with each of the speakers; their messages resonated on various levels, offering a sense of renewal and healing."

Tita Collective's performance was an extraordinary blend of artistry and activism — reflecting both creativity and resilience — and resonated with all those in attendance. It was especially affirming to hear Black and Indigenous perspectives amplified in a space designed to celebrate and empower us, making the conference a powerful opportunity to connect, learn, and grow together.

I will certainly try to attend this conference each year to deepen my understanding, connect with a community of advocates, celebrate excellence, and contribute to the ongoing movement for equity and justice from the ground up.

Derek Amegah

JUNETEENTH

FREEDOM DAY

On June 19th, the Toronto Racialized Members Committee, in collaboration with the Toronto Women's Committee, held an in-person event to celebrate Juneteenth, a moment to honour the resilience and strength of Black communities in their ongoing fight for freedom and justice. While Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery in the United States, its celebration in Canada is equally significant. It invites us to reflect on our own history of Black enslavement, the courage of those who journeyed the Underground Railroad, and the persistent impact of anti-Black racism in our society. Recognizing Juneteenth is not just about the past, it is a call to action for continued education, dialogue, and commitment to building a more just and equitable Canada for all. It was a great evening with two powerful guests: Ontario's Poet Laureate, Randell Adjei, and poet and equity educator, Crystel Kerr, and some amazing food!



Chinese Head Tax & Exclusion Act Redress Day

June 22 officially marked Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act Redress Day in Canada, a time to remember a dark chapter in our country's history and reflect on the ongoing struggles against racism and exclusion.

The Chinese Head Tax and the *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1923 (commonly referred to as the Chinese Exclusion Act) were a series of racist, anti-immigrant policies implemented by the Canadian government beginning in the late 19th century. These laws were designed to restrict and ultimately bar Chinese immigration, despite the fact that many Chinese workers had been instrumental in building key parts of Canada's infrastructure, including the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Once their labour was no longer seen as necessary, Chinese workers were excluded and scapegoated. From 1885 to 1923, Chinese immigrants were forced to pay a punitive Head Tax simply to enter Canada. In 1923, the Chinese Immigration Act outright banned almost all Chinese immigration, a policy that remained in place for 24 years, until 1947.

It is important to acknowledge that these exclusionary policies were not only implemented by the Canadian government but, at times, reflected the broader attitudes and social norms of the era, including within segments of the labour movement. Rather than uniting with Chinese workers to confront exploitative employers, some workers and unions of the time supported exclusionary measures that reinforced racial divisions. This weakened collective power and provided employers and governments with a convenient scapegoat. The exclusion of Chinese workers led to greater exploitation, lower wages, and diminished protections, outcomes that ultimately harmed all working people.

After decades of organizing and advocacy, Chinese Canadian communities, alongside allies, won a formal apology from the Government of Canada on June 22, 2006. However, many rightly argue that the redress remains incomplete. Survivors and families called for a "one certificate, one claim" approach to compensation, but the federal redress was far narrower and more exclusionary.

Furthermore, the same structures of exclusion that once denied Chinese workers basic rights still exist today in Canada's labour system. Migrant and racialized workers, especially those under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, continue to face systemic exploitation, lack access to union protections, and are often excluded from full workplace rights.

We also cannot ignore the rise of anti-Asian and anti-Chinese racism in recent years, including at institutional and governmental levels. These trends reflect a continuity of exclusionary thinking, and they demand a strong, unified response rooted in anti-racism and worker solidarity.

As a union, we must commit to confronting the legacies of racism in our own history and workspaces. This includes unlearning forms of oppression such as anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, Islamophobia, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. Our strength lies in our solidarity and in building a labour movement that truly represents and defends all workers.

In the face of growing inequality, rising xenophobia, and global instability, we must resist the scapegoating of immigrants and migrants. Let us stand together to build a future rooted in justice, dignity, and equity for all.

More information [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

August 1 marks Emancipation Day in Canada, commemorating the day in 1834 when the *Slavery Abolition Act* came into effect across the British Empire, including here in Canada.

It is a time to reflect on the legacy of slavery, honour the strength and resilience of Black communities, and recognize the continued fight against anti-Black racism and inequality.

Emancipation Day is not only a day of remembrance, but also one of celebration. One of the most vibrant expressions of this celebration is the Toronto Caribbean Carnival (formerly Caribana), which takes place each summer and has its roots in Carnival traditions from Trinidad and Tobago. These celebrations began as acts of resistance and expressions of freedom by formerly enslaved Africans. They brought their music, dance, and culture into the streets to reclaim space, identity, and joy.

A central symbol of this cultural celebration is the steel pan, a musical instrument invented in Trinidad and Tobago and widely recognized as the only acoustic instrument created in the 20th century. Born out of oppression and creativity, the steel pan emerged when enslaved people were forbidden from using drums. It stands today as a powerful reminder of resilience, ingenuity, and cultural pride. The steel pan and its cultural significance is celebrated in a yearly event in Toronto called Panorama.

A moving extension of this remembrance is the TTC's Underground Freedom Train Ride, held late on July 31 into August 1. From Union Station to Downsview Park, this train journey invites up to 1,200 participants to symbolically retrace the path of those who fled slavery via the Underground Railroad into Canada. It features poetry performances, drumming, singing, and reflections that connect travellers to a history of sacrifice, liberation, and hope.

By recognizing Emancipation Day and participating in events such as the Toronto Carnival, Panorama, and the Freedom Train Ride, we honour this history and affirm the contributions of Black Canadians. It is a call to reflect, celebrate, and continue the work of building a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

The Toronto Racialized Members Committee invites you to submit your name for a chance to win two tickets to Panorama or to the Toronto Caribbean Carnival Parade! The draw for both events will take place on July 22nd and winners will be notified shortly after. To enter, please email rvctoronto@gmail.com with your full name and PSAC ID number by July 21st.

Please note that winners must be available to attend these events on either August 1st or 2nd and they will be required to submit pictures and a short write-up of their experiences at these events which will be included in the next edition of our newsletter.