



# Anti-Oppression Committee Mandate

## MANDATE

1. The mandate of the Anti-Oppression Committee is
  - a. to understand, educate and promote within Spoken Word Canada and all its affiliated member series and national programming, anti-oppressive organizational policies and procedures in order to create spaces that are as free from systemic oppression as possible. This includes promoting practices that do not discriminate based on race, class, religion, gender, sex, orientation, ability, or age.
  - b. **Systemic oppression is defined as: (this section to be worded by AOC 2014-2015)**
  - c. To understand, educate and promote within SpoCan sanctioned events adherence to the SpoCan Code of Honour. (See below.)

## STRUCTURE

1. The Anti-Oppression Committee will be a sub-committee of the SpoCan Board of Directors. There will be 5 members on the Committee, **elected from the SpoCan Board and general membership, for one year terms.**
  - a. The Committee will be elected each year at the Annual General Meeting.
  - b. All members of the Committee have a vote.
2. Committee members will elect a Chair.
  - a. The Chair's duties include setting meeting times, making sure minutes are recorded, keeping the Committee on task, **and reporting back to the Board.**

- b. The Chair will keep accurate records of all committee meetings, actions, and grievances, and pass on this information to the incoming chair of the committee at the end of their term. All grievance information will be kept confidential.**

## **PROCESS**

### **1. Meetings**

The Committee will meet at least once a month via telephone/internet.

### **2. Presence at National Festivals**

All Committee members in attendance at SpoCan's affiliated National Festivals: Canadian Festival of Spoken Word, Canadian Individual Poetry Slam, and YouthCanSlam, will hold a meeting and/or workshop during each festival. The purpose of this meeting/workshop will be to give space to its members to voice any concerns, or to give any recommendations to the Committee.

### **3. Resource Body**

The Committee will act as a source of information on anti-oppression practices and policies and the current status of safer spaces within the national spoken word community by:

- a. circulating and making available resources regarding best anti-oppression practices and policies on the SpoCan website.
- b. administering a national survey every two years to all member series regarding anti-oppression safer spaces, and publishing a report on the findings which includes recommendations.

### **4. Grievances**

If any member of the Canadian spoken word community at SpoCan-sponsored events (Canadian Festival of Spoken Word, Canadian Individual Poetry Slam, YouthCanSlam) feels that they have been subject to a breach of the SpoCan Code of Honour or any related anti-oppression issue on the part of another individual member or member series, they may file a grievance with the Anti-Oppression Committee. The Committee will act as a mediation body to these grievances.

- a. The member who wishes to file a grievance (herein called "the Petitioner") can do so by filling out the "SpoCan Anti-Oppression Committee Grievance Form" (see below) and sending it in an email to [aocspocan@gmail.com](mailto:aocspocan@gmail.com).
- b. The Chair will forward the grievance to the Committee and address the issue at the next

meeting. The Committee will contact both the Petitioner and the person(s) named in the grievance (herein called “The Respondent”) by telephone to hear their recollection of events. The Committee may also contact organizers at the respective member series to find out more information.

- c. The Chair may choose to delegate a representative from the Committee to be the liaison for a particular grievance.
- d. All members of the Committee will sign a confidentiality agreement that prohibits them from speaking about grievances outside of the Committee.
- e. Both the Petitioner and Respondent will be prohibited from speaking or posting publicly about the incident until a final decision is made. A member of the Committee will discuss with both parties what communication, if any, should be made to the SpoCan community about the issue.
- e. The Committee will discuss the grievance, and on a case-by-base basies consult appropriate professionals and/or qualified persons, **recognizing that there are persons who have expertise through lived experience**. The Committee will send a recommendation to the Board for approval. Recommendations could include: further mediation, connection to resources, mandatory counseling, and bans from future SpoCan-sponsored events. Recommendations will not interfere with the sovereignty of local member series to determine how they run their events. Recommendations for bans will only apply to SpoCan-sponsored festivals and any other future SpoCan-sponsored events.
- f. The Board will discuss the recommendation at the next Board meeting, and either approve, amend or send it back to the Committee for further information.
- g. The Anti-Oppression Committee Chair will ensure that the recommendation is carried out.

## 5. Conflict of Interest

- a. **In the event that a grievance filed to the Committee comes into a conflict of interest because a member of the committee is involved (ie. the grievance is filed against a Committee member, or a Committee member is close to the situation in question), that Committee member will step back from the Committee for that particular grievance.**
- b. In the event that a local grievance cannot be dealt with by the local member series because there is a conflict of interest, (ie. the grievance is filed against a slammaster) these grievances may be filed with the Committee. The Committee will engage in these grievances on a case-by-case basis in an advisory capacity by offering mediation to local slam scenes,

providing connections to resources, and individual counseling; however, SpoCan will not make binding judgments in these situations.



# Code of Honour

As an individual participant in SpoCan events and initiatives, I understand and agree:

1. To revel in an environment in which freedom of speech, self-determination, and pursuit of creative excellence are inalienable rights.
2. To participate in all SpoCan events in a way that encourages, illuminates and supports established standards of good sportsmanship.
3. To refuse to allow the competitive challenge of the game to lead me to violence, interference, direct or indirect threats.
4. To allow all participants to pursue their craft peacefully and without censure, regardless of present associations or past personal history.
5. To comply with local, provincial and federal laws pertaining to individual civil rights and physical or sexual harassment.
6. To abide by all SpoCan rules, regulations, procedures and policies, including this Code of Honour, knowing that consequences for breaking the rules/code exist and will be upheld.
7. Penalties will be determined by the severity of the infraction, and the ruling of:
  - a) The emcee/bout manager/tournament or series director or where applicable, the Executive Committee of the SpoCan Board of Directors and/or a committee delegated by them for such purpose, in the context of a slam tournament or other SpoCan event;
  - b) The Executive Committee of the SpoCan Board of Directors and/or a committee delegated by them for such purpose, outside the context of a slam tournament or other SpoCan event.



## **Anti-Oppression Committee Grievance Form**

Please fill in this form and email it to [aocspocan@gmail.com](mailto:aocspocan@gmail.com). The Anti-Oppression Committee will act as a mediation body in response to grievances from its members regarding any anti-oppression or safer spaces issues or incidents that arise at Spocan-sponsored events. You will receive a reply that we have received your grievance, and please allow 1-3 weeks for the Committee to meet and respond to you.

**In the meantime, please access more immediate services that you may need. As it may apply to your case, this may include contacting personal support people, local counselling services, legal services or law enforcement. We encourage you to seek aid alongside filing your grievance with the Committee.**

**Name of person(s) filing grievance:**

**Email:**

**Phone Number:**

**Name of your spoken word community (if applicable):**

**1) Please detail the specifics of your grievance:**

**2) (Optional)**

**Please attach in your email, any necessary evidence. Such evidence can consist of but is not limited to: saved copies of emails, messages, or posts, saved screen captures of internet posts, witness of another person.**

**Please name and give notes on each piece of attached evidence below:**

**3) Do you have any suggestions for the Committee moving forward?:**

*Thank you for your patience and commitment to anti-oppression and creating safer spaces in our community.*