

## Artifacts/Images

Artifact 1



Artifact 3



Artifact 2

### BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

For several decades until the late 1980s, this site was a large coach yard where sleeping car porters working for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) prepared passenger cars for travel to the United States and across Canada, which could take up to four days and nights. Black men were preferred for the job because of their long history in domestic service to whites. Porters working for Canadian railways came from Black communities in Canada, but were also recruited from the United States and the Caribbean.

Porters faced institutional racism in all aspects of their work: their pay was lower, they were barred from promotions to supervisory positions, and they were excluded from white railway workers' unions. They began to organize, most successfully in 1939, by joining forces with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), an American union created in 1925.

On May 18, 1945, the BSCP became the first Black union in Canada to sign an agreement with its employer, the CPR. Among other benefits, porters' starting salaries increased, they received pay for downtime on the road, and, after 1955, they could be promoted to sleeping car conductor.

The BSCP's organizing efforts and civil rights advocacy left a powerful legacy that influenced human rights policy and labour relations in Canada.

A CPR sleeping car porter at work, no date. Porters were expected to perform unpaid work preparing the sleeping cars before departure. During the trip, they were responsible for catering to all of their passengers' needs. Before unionization, porters slept for only three hours per night, sometimes on makeshift beds in the smoking car. Black porters were often well-educated; however, working as a porter was one of the few better paid jobs open to Black men at the time.  
Canadian Pacific Railway Archives

Sleeping car porters (left to right) Shirley Jackson, Pete Stevens, Harry Gairey (Porter Instructor), and Jimmy Downes, post-1945.  
Daniel G. Hill Collection, Library and Archives Canada

Ladies Auxiliary, Toronto Pullman Division, BSCP. Wives, daughters, sisters, and widows of porters formed the Ladies Auxiliary. They focused on education and fundraising initiatives.  
Stanley G. Orzelle Collection, Library and Archives Canada

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Artifact 4



Artifact 5

