

Report: Introduction to Stewarding Workshop

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The Introduction to Stewarding Workshop was extremely beneficial, as a Camosun employee, CUPE member, as a potential Shop Steward, as well as, in my current position as Administrative Coordinator with the School of Arts & Science. The workshop enabled the diverse individuals represented at the workshop table to share, discuss, reflect and learn. Although, there were differing points of view and perceived outcomes of scenarios brought forth, the value of this course was in having effective facilitators to guide us through the following:

- The benefits of unions,
- The structure of the local union, as well as, the CUPE national,
- The importance of referring to the c/a (each one is unique),
- Understanding the rights of members,
- Learning how to advocate for members' rights as outlined in the c/a,
- Establishing your role of the Steward:
 - o Making yourself known within the membership, and building trust.
 - o Investigating and gathering facts:
 - The 6 Ws – Who, what, where, when and why.
- Relationship-building with management, and how best to navigate meetings with them, and
- Unresolved issues, and grievances.

All topics touched on were important, but the most helpful tool provided during this workshop was the Grievance Fact Sheet. Regardless of whether this fact sheet is used specifically for a grievance or not, it is most advantageous in the collection of information pertinent to issues claimed by a member, which require further investigation. The form can be used as a guide at the initial stages of a concern, when interviewing a member, as well as, a resource document throughout the resolution process, through to the end. It guides the steward, covering the initial meeting with the member (the 6 Ws), what the employer contends, the employee record of conduct, as well as, information given by witnesses. I particularly appreciate the detailed outline on the Grievance Fact Sheet because it not only reinforces the rights of the individual, but also reinforces the rights of all, and the whole of the union, as outlined in the Collective Agreement. The Grievance Fact Sheet's points serve as a subtle reminder to enquire on all accounts, and not just focus on, and react solely to the individual member's account. Ultimately, the format of the Grievance Fact Sheet lends itself to strengthening the process for the entire union body, encouraging positive interactions and engagement.

I appreciate the opportunity to learn about the roles and responsibilities of a steward, and I thank the union for providing the time and funds for me to gain valuable skills that will be advantageous in overcoming challenges within professional working relationships.