

**EXECUTIVE REPORT – APRIL ATKINS, OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND
SAFETY COORDINATOR**

October 20-25, 2019: Understanding Humanities workshops in Nanaimo, BC

Monday: October 21, 2019 – **Combating Workplace Bullying** – We looked at common bullying behaviours and the cycle of bullying. Reviewed some case study scenarios and discussed next steps. Collective agreement language from Canadian Union of Public Employees with reference to the workplace harassment and violence reviewed. Anti-harassment policy defined and reviewed the complaint process. What can I do? Always talk to someone you trust, document what is happening, keep copies of any information, stand by a bullied co-worker immediately and be attentive to your own behaviour. Other options are don't take part in gossip or discrediting, talk to a steward, talk to your JOSH Committee, talk to the bully not alone, file a Human Rights complaint and get more education. We also looked at what the employer should do with protection from bullying and our own personal commitment. Bullying hurts the individual, the employer and the union. Reviewed the signs of workplace bullying to watch for the following: unhappy work environments, high staff turnover, high absenteeism, low production, poor morale, higher sickness levels, low efficiency and frequent complaints and/or grievances. We should be aware of policies and know change is possible. It is an honor and privilege to work in an environment of our rights and knowing we shall never tolerate workplace bullying.

Tuesday: October 22, 2019 – **Duty to accommodate** – We looked at the process of when a member seeks an accommodation. The Canadian Human Rights Act makes the duty to accommodate a legal requirement. Reviewed the Human Rights Law as the Duty to Accommodate Act sets out protected grounds on age, sex, family and marital status, pardoned and suspended convictions, disability, gender identity, religion vs. creed, family status, marital status, age, sex, disability and mental disorder. Reviewed the BC Human Rights Code. Scenarios were of most interest to identify next steps with cases. Legal duty to accommodate summarized in each scenario. The union and employer have obligations. Duties defined from each party, union, employer and member. Does our union include within the collective agreement to support accommodations in the workplace? More information sent to the participants at the workshop with regard to sit/standing stations. We should review the statutory days off i.e. Christmas exchange date for Jehovah Witness celebration. Chinese New Year can also be exchanged with New Years Day where needed to celebration with time off. "You are the Union" is a great response to someone who is unsure about the union membership.

Wednesday: October 23, 2019 – **Health and Safety: Understanding mental injuries at work** – The workshop covered psychologically healthy and safe workplace, why mental health and mental injury are important aspects of health & safety activism, psychosocial hazards in our workplace, impacts of mental injuries, root causes of mental injuries and ways to prevent mental injuries. We looked at hazards, distress, injury, illness and psychologically healthy and safe workplaces. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) helps assess the degree of good to poor mental health with severe to no mental illness. Several case studies reviewed looking at the root causes of the situation to how we could promote the psychological health and safety at the workplace. Some of the psychosocial hazards to look for discussed in groups. Tips for taking action for committee members, union leaders and health & safety activists addressed. Lastly, a questionnaire for assessment of the psychosocial work environment was a good way to look at our current work place environment.

During the evening Barry O’Neil, Past CUPE BC President was the keynote speaker. Barry is an icon to the Union of BC, recently retired and held a strong presence with keeping union members engaged with justice for our CUPE members.

Thursday: October 24, 2019 – **Conflict at Work – This workshop covered conflict at work**, understanding someone else’s position in a conflict and conflict communication skills. Different scenarios studied when conflict arises at work, both negative and positive. Conflict is a natural and normal part of life. Conflict itself is not positive or negative, but the way we respond to conflict can be positive or negative. Without conflict, there would be no change. Things would not get better. Possible sources of conflict are assumptions, beliefs, communication, ego, expectations, goals, needs, power roles, strategy, style and values. Communication tips were reviewed with language that might help and identifying language that will not help. We practiced a positive approach to engaging with conversations by saying, “yes and...”

Friday: October 25, 2019 – Reviewed material throughout the week. Prepared presentation to the rest of the CUPE groups at the weeklong workshop.

Overall, it was a great opportunity to be part of an amazing group of CUPE members from all over British Columbia. Thank you.

In Solidarity,

April Atkins
Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator, CUPE Local 2081
November 14, 2019