

Correspondence Secretary (CS)

Kelly Speak - Final Report

OVERVIEW

Since I have stepped out of the role of Correspondence Secretary in May 2020, I have had time to reflect on my experiences. It seems that no report or discussions can be written without mentioning the impact COVID-19 has had on our work and our lives. I always valued our face-to-face executive and general meetings, but we learned quickly how to do things the 'new' way plus we have had phenomenal leadership from our CUPE leaders. I believe we can tackle anything and on a more personal note I believe my 11.5 years at the college have clarified for me what to tackle and what to leave alone.

My experience on the executive for the past 3 years have been informative. I have learned about getting out there and doing what I said I would do with the knowledge that I am trusted to do a good job on. Positive reinforcement from both Keith and Erynne did not go unnoticed so THANK YOU! I see how you motivate others and how you keep your eye on a potential person who would be a good fit for an executive position and allow them opportunities to grow into the role if they want to. All good things for CUPE 2081.

I also see that turnout to general meetings is quite frankly bordering dismal. We have all done our best to remedy this, but it feels like moving a mountain sometimes. I sincerely wish this would change and see that a few others are stepping up as per the upcoming election. 😊

WHAT THE UNION MEANS TO ME (if you read nothing else in this report...)

The union has supported and fought for my collective rights. When an unjust decision was made regarding my education leave in the Fall of 2016 I turned to my union rep. the union rep listened, understood the situation and referred to the Collective Agreement to show me how we could win the grievance! The shop steward played a key role and confirmed to me what I already knew...that management in my department at the college was being unreasonable. I am forever grateful for the support when I needed it most and that is a little part of why I became involved on the executive. In turn I have been on the executive for 2 years. I have given input on more than 1 occasion to my sisters and brothers who were faced with decisions on whether to take alternative placement or bump. This input was based on my experiences as both an employee who was in a similar situation, as a shop steward and as someone who made the 'nice' decision but the WRONG DECISION. That is how I learned.

If you too want to learn, I encourage anyone reading this to get involved or continue to be involved. The leaders (and we are all leaders) in this union need your help and support! There is much work to be done. You can do it!

BACKGROUND

When I took on the role of Correspondence Secretary (CS) in May, 2018, I recall it was vacant so I had no handoff of duties but, the Chief Shop Steward at the time showed me the basics of managing the incoming and outgoing correspondence and I took it from there. We had discussed having me start a records management project to deal with the backlog of CUPE 2081 documents. This interested me as I had just completed a certification in archives and records management, in short how to organize a big mess of documents in boxes. This included sorting, scanning, identifying and categorizing the contents of the >20 boxes in storage above the filing cabinets in the CUPE office. I made an initial start with the LOA's (letters of agreement, in 2 large binders) which I scanned as pdf's and gave files names to each document based on chronological order or subject matter. When the incoming Chief Shop Steward arrived, I submitted a project proposal to pick up where I left off. Almost 1 year went by and amazingly the project got completed without my involvement. I understand it was fast tracked in order to create space in the office and to reveal what was in these many boxes. I regret the loss of the opportunity but not the task itself...Kudos to Petty and Erynne 😊. I learned patience.

ACTION

Over the first year as CS I attended an LACC meeting and a Contracting Out meeting to get me oriented. As well as keeping up with my CS regular duties I attended VLC and VIDC meetings. I was also fortunate enough to attend and participate in the VIDC Conference in Nanaimo where I attended 5 VIDC Leadership workshops and The KAIROS Blanket Exercise. This exercise is a reconciliation workshop that uses blankets to represent the land regions of what is now called Canada, and the distinct cultures and nations that live on those lands to this day. Highlights of the conference for me were;

- Understanding Mental Health and Understanding Mental Injuries at Work (3 hours)
- Creating Psychologically Healthy Workplaces (3 hours)
- Violence Prevention in the Workplace (3 hours)
- Solidarity Beyond Borders (3 hours)

I submitted a 2-page report upon my return from Nanaimo. Attending such events gave me the opportunity to stand up and speak. Good public speaking practice for me and a rusty skill I was able to rekindle. I can now do 7 minutes speeches in French thanks to my PD funding and a lot of perseverance. 😊

CS GENERAL TASKS;

I received, read and scanned all incoming paper correspondence and created electronic files based on chronologic order

I produced a CS report ~ every 3 months and brought each CS report to executive committee then to the general meeting afterwards

If a piece of correspondence was not received, I would track it down and make sure it was expedited for action once received. I also corrected addresses or names on incoming correspondence by contacting the sender to update their files.

I took the opportunity to pursue shop steward education and notetaking courses during my stint as Correspondence Secretary.

Because the workload for the Correspondence Secretary has changed over the last 10 years, I was offered the chance to work with Shelley Butler, Education Coordinator as her workload was large. I assisted with 2 retirement workshops taking on enrollment, room bookings and liaising with CUPE National. Unfortunately, the 2020 Retirement Workshop had to be cancelled.

NOTE: I am available to assist new CS until Feb 2021.

GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES;

- 1) As an executive committee member, I was happy to be assigned to be on the Strike Committee. I produced pdf maps of both campuses and outlined a strike walking route and washroom stops on them. I worked with another committee member on these and was glad we didn't need to use them in 2019-2020.
- 2) Assisted trustees with counting ballots during meetings where elections were held. I had organized the Board of Governors and Student Council elections on campus and because of these experiences I was able to get hired as a voting clerk, information officer and eventually a supervisor at 2 Federal elections in 2019. Now that is taking an opportunity and running with it, I would think!

In closing,

Take every opportunity no matter how small and it will lead to self-discovery and confidence if you come from a place of good intentions.

Kelly Speak

Outgoing CS, May 2020