

Unit 2 Report

Julia Smith - VP Unit 2

Fall was a busy time for Unit 2 members.

Orientation Week: Your union devoted considerable time, energy, and resources to Orientation Week to increase CUPE visibility and Unit 2 member involvement. By the end of the week, your Union Executive had spoken with almost every incoming graduate student worker.

PDEA Fund: November applications have been processed and cheques will be sent out this month. The next deadline for applications is March 15; all forms and receipts must be received in the CUPE office by this time. Check out the CUPE website for more information or to download a form.

Unit 2 members were also involved in bargaining a new contract (see page 3), solidarity activities (page 2), and many social events.

CUPE 3908 Executive, 2011-2012

President: Stephen Horner. Stephen works in the Business Department and has been the Local's President since 2010. president@cupe3908.org

General VP: Diane Therrien. Diane is a recent graduate of the Frost Centre MA program and is a dedicated social justice activist. She works as a tutorial leader in the Canadian Studies Department. vicepres@cupe3908.org

Treasurer: Aimee Blyth. Aimee works in the Gender and Women's Studies Department and is the co-ordinator for the Seasoned Spoon. treasurer@cupe3908.org

Communications: Andy Cragg. Andy works as a TA in the Politics Department and as a grader in the Philosophy Department. He blogs at andycragg.ca. communications@cupe3908.org

VP Unit 1: Dave Tough. A fixture of the local music scene, Dave is also a TA and sessional instructor in the Politics Department. vp1@cupe3908.org

Vp Unit 2: Julia Smith. Julia work is a PhD student in Canadian Studies and works in the Gender and Women's Studies Department. vp2@cupe3908.org

Chief Steward Unit 1: Vacant. Let us know if you're interested!

Chief Steward Unit 2: Sean Carleton. Sean is a PhD student in Canadian Studies and works in the Gender and Women's Studies Department. steward2@cupe3908.org

About this newsletter

The *CUPE 3908 Dispatch* will be published on a monthly basis throughout the academic year. We welcome contributions from any member of the Local, including especially features (max. 600 words) and member profiles (max. 400 words). Submissions should be sent, by the 5th of the month, to communications@cupe3908.org

Want to be a voice for workers in your department - become a CUPE Steward! email: steward2@cupe3908.org.

Bylaw Revision Meeting

Come learn about and vote on revisions to the Local's bylaws. Refreshments provided. Tuesday January 24, 7-9pm
CUPE Regional Office, (Sherbrooke and George).

What is a Grievance?

Stephen Horner - President, CUPE 3908

As a Steward, one of the things I often heard from members was that they had never really understood why, as workers in an enlightened place like Trent, we needed a Union. That changed when they experienced arbitrary or unfair treatment, and found recourse through the grievance process.

A grievance is a formal process for resolving concerns or complaints about working conditions. Both Unit 1 and Unit 2 members can use the grievance process. While grievances are ultimately resolved by a binding decision made by an arbitrator, the goal is a negotiated settlement prior to arbitration.

In some cases, concerns can be resolved informally. An informal discussion of the issue with a supervisor is, in fact, the first step of the grievance process. Where that doesn't work, or where such a conversation would be risky, the grievance process begins at Step II—submission of a written grievance and a meeting between the Departmental Chair and a Union Steward. The Steward will clarify the worker's rights under the Collective Agreement (or relevant legislation), and propose a resolution. If the Chair agrees, or proposes an alternative satisfactory resolution, the grievance is withdrawn. If not, it can be advanced to the next stage—a meeting with HR (Step III) or the Dean (Step IV).

What can be grieved? Almost any concern can be addressed through the grievance process. Because the early stages focus on negotiated settlement rather than a strict interpretation of the contract, members and stewards are encouraged to file grievances even if they aren't sure that a legal right has been violated. Think of the grievance process as a way to say "This is an issue of concern, and it needs to be heard".

It is important to realize that filing a grievance also benefits your fellow workers. Ideally, Collective Agreement rights would always be respected and everyone would always be treated fairly, and so we wouldn't ever have any grievances. But when that doesn't happen, filing a grievance lets the Employer know that something isn't working as it should. A history of grievances gives the Union the ability to demand changes to problematic practices and policies.

If you have a concern, get in touch with your departmental steward. If you don't know who that is, email your Unit's chief steward: steward1@cupe3908.org or steward2@cupe3908.org.

Talking to your Union rep is always confidential. Your rep will offer options and advice, and will support you in whatever decision you make about the best way to resolve your concerns.

Full text of the Collective Agreements can be found on our website, cupe3908.org, under the "Publications" tab.

Social Events

We've got big plans for the winter term:

January 26, 7:30pm-9:30pm,
Pub Night at the Black Horse (452 George Street North).

January 29, 1pm,
Winter Walk in Mount Pleasant with Professor Emeritus and naturalist John Wadland

February
Labour Activist Café: details TBD

If you have an idea for a social event or would like to join the committee, email General Vice-President Diane Therrien: vicepres@cupe3908.org. The committee meets monthly and is an easy but awesome way to get involved in your union.

Address

office@cupe3908.org

CUPE 3908: Trent works because we do!
www.cupe3908.org

 **@CUPE 3908**