

Vancouver & District Labour Council

2026 Labour Education

Anita Yan Memorial Law Series

Welcome to our 2026 SPRING Education Session. Classes start on February 25 and run through to June 10, 2026.

Defamation Law for Unions - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

February 25, Wednesday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitator: Leo McGrady

Unions and union officers have long been the subject of defamation lawsuits, whether for media statements, leaflets, newspaper pieces, posted workplace notices, and even picket signs. However, two things have changed in recent years. With the increased use of social media for organizing campaigns, regular communications with members, bargaining, and in strikes/lockouts, unions are increasingly dealing with threats of lawsuits, demands for apologies, and actual lawsuits. This change is made the more serious by the increase in damage awards, particularly for corporate plaintiffs.

This one day course is intended to equip those attending with the ability to make their own judgement as to whether or not they or their union risk a lawsuit for what they are publishing. It will deal with the definition of defamation, as well as the various defenses to an action for defamation. It will concentrate on the defenses of justification, fair comment, qualified privilege, and responsible communication. It will also deal with the new legislation designed to protect individuals and organizations from lawsuits that are primarily intended to silence criticisms - the SLAPP law - Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation.

WCB Level I - ZOOM Video Conference

March 3, Tuesday - 10:00am to 3:00pm

Registration: 5 Hours - \$90 per VDLC Affiliate / \$115 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: Sarah O'Leary & Caitlin O'Leary

This course provides a basic overview of the Workers' Compensation system as it applies to workers who are injured or develop an occupational disease on the job. The course will look at the law and policy, how decisions are made by the WCB, and how the appeal system works for those who have to argue an appeal. We will look at the practical realities faced by injured workers trying to navigate the minefield of Workers' Compensation and its appellate systems.

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

Registration Open at www.vdvc.ca / Education

Navigating Repetitive Strain Injuries (ASTDs) in the WCB Appeal System - ZOOM

March 4, Wednesday - 9:00am to 3:00pm

Registration: 6 Hours - \$100 per VDLC Affiliate / \$125 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: Pamela Yong & Niki Schnurr

This course will summarize how the WCB adjudicates repetitive strain injuries (ie: Activity-Related Soft Tissue Disorders or ASTDs). ASTDs in policy are defined as a diverse group of soft tissue disorders of the extremities which may have been caused or aggravated by employment activities. For example, Tendinopathy, Epicondylopathy, Bursitis, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, De Quervain's Tenosynovitis, etc., can be considered ASTDs. Generally, ASTDs develop over time and are due to repetitive work activities. Occupational diseases under s.136 of the Workers' Compensation Act are compensable if evidence demonstrates they are due to the nature of the of the worker's employment. These claims are complex, can be the result of multiple contributing factors and the WCB often denies them. We will discuss our usual steps on appealing ASTD claim denials, including the type of evidence required, such as ergonomic risk factor assessments and medical-legal opinions.

1. Law, Policy Practice Directive
2. Summary of what the WCB Looks for in adjudicating ASTDs
3. Types of evidence for appeal
4. Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal (WCAT), noteworthy cases on ASTDs
5. Case law, including Judicial Reviews of WCAT decisions

Discipline & Discharge - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre - **NEW DATE**

March 6, Friday, 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: Karen Segal & Katherine Benson

How do you represent a member who has been disciplined? Find out the rules that employers must follow and get up to date information on recent developments. We'll share practical tips and strategies to assess and present a discipline grievance.

Advanced WCB: Appeals - ZOOM Video Conference

March 31, Tuesday - 10:00am to 3:00pm

Registration: 5 Hours - \$90 per VDLC Affiliate / \$115 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: Sarah O'Leary & Caitlin O'Leary

This course will build on the information and skills of experienced WCB reps and/or those who have taken the WCB Level I beginner course. The course will focus on effective advocacy skills at the WCB and its appeal bodies. Effective advocacy includes identifying likely issues for particular cases of injury or occupational disease, knowing the Board's case, and obtaining new evidence, especially medical evidence. As time permits, we will review written submission templates and how to prepare (and prepare your worker), for an oral hearing.

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

Registration Open at www.vdvc.ca / Education

Private Prosecutions - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

April 7, Tuesday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: Leo McGrady & Andrew McKay

Employees are often the first to learn of employer misconduct, either health and safety violations, or environmental law violations. At times, tragically, where a colleague is injured or killed, or where there is some devastating environmental damage that results from employer disregard of an important environmental law. In many cases, the police investigate and charges are laid, but there are many other cases in which there is an inadequate investigation or none, and no charges are laid. In these latter circumstances, a union member having the skill and knowledge to initiate a private prosecution can be invaluable. This course is designed to provide that skill and knowledge.

We recommend that students attending the course download a copy of the excellent *A Citizen's and Lawyer's Guide to Private Prosecutions in British Columbia* from the Environmental Law Centre at the University of Victoria, prepared for the Watershed Watch Salmon Society - [A-Citizens-and-Lawyers-Guide-to-Private-Prosecution-in-BC.pdf](#). It will be used as an invaluable resource during the course.

Collective Bargaining - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

April 8 & 9 , Wednesday & Thursday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 2 Days - \$225 per VDLC Affiliate / \$300 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: David Fleming & Michelle Anderson

This workshop will introduce participants to the bargaining process and legal framework for bargaining. Participants will learn about the importance of preparation and planning, what to expect at the table, and tools for having your committee work as a team. The workshop will also emphasize the importance of being strategic, both in negotiations and in your union's work to build your bargaining power.

History, Teachings and How to Work Towards Reconciliation Through an Indigenous Lens - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

April 13 & 14, Monday & Tuesday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 2 Days - \$225 per VDLC Affiliate / \$300 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitator: Anjeanette Dawson

This course will examine the history, knowledge, and teachings from an Indigenous lens; the impact of colonization, the inter-generational impacts of the Residential School system, the work of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission, and an overview of current Aboriginal issues. We will examine the relevance and barriers for Indigenous people concerning issues in the labour movement and groups will brainstorm ways in what is learned, and how it can be used in the workplace to works towards Reconciliation.

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

Registration Open at www.vdvc.ca / Education

Job Steward Level I - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

April 15, Wednesday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitator: Bal Sandhu

The position of job steward is the most important position in a union and is often the first point of contact a member has with their union. You stand with and speak for your fellow members in the day-to-day relations between the union and management in your workplace. This course will lay the foundation for your understanding of the responsibilities of a job steward and will help broaden your understanding of the labour movement.

Parliamentary Procedure and Effective Meetings - IN PERSON at the MLC

April 21, Tuesday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitator: Adrienne Smith

This course will provide you with all the basics of parliamentary procedure and the necessary skills to run a meeting effectively. Topics covered will include the duties of a chairperson and secretary, what the rules of order are and how they work, and how the rules of order can provide a democratic and fair process to get the business of your union, labour council or other organization accomplished.

Intro to Arbitration & Labour Board Advocacy - IN PERSON at the MLC

May 5 & 6, Tuesday & Wednesday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 2 Days - \$225 per VDLC Affiliate / \$300 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: Leo McGrady & Susanna Allevato Quail

Many shop stewards become skilled advocates in winning the unions case at arbitration and other third party hearings. This course will assist you to better prepare and present cases by learning some basic legal protocols, techniques, and procedures. The curriculum covers pre-hearing matters, opening statements, direct and cross examination, making objections, and closing arguments.

Canada Labour Code: Part I - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

May 7, Thursday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitator: Tamara Ramusovic

BC based workers and their unions in federally regulated industries and workplaces (i.e. telecommunications, interprovincial transportation, postal and courier service, grain elevators, etc.) are covered by the *Canada Labour Code*. This course is designed to provide an understanding of key aspects of the code and its application to the unions and employers covered by federal labour law. In this course we will focus on Part I of the *Code*, dealing with labour relations. The most important sections will be reviewed, including those dealing with certification, unfair labour practices, and the duty to bargain in good faith, along with interpretations and key rulings that illustrate the application of the *Code*.

*Canada Labour Code Part II takes place on Monday June 8, 2026

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

Registration Open at www.vdvc.ca / Education

Freedom of Information Requests - ZOOM Video Conference

May 20, Wednesday - 10:00am to 2:00pm

Registration: 4 Hours - \$75 per VDLC Affiliate / \$100 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitator: Alicia Massie

This hands-on course demystifies the process of accessing information through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests at all levels of government. From municipal records to federal documents, you'll learn how to effectively navigate information access systems to gather both publicly available and as-yet-unavailable data.

Political Economy for Union Activists - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

May 22, Friday - 10:00am to 2:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 4 Hours - \$25 for both VDLC Affiliates and Non-Affiliates

Facilitator: Kayla Hilstob

The battles we fight with our Employers are impacted by the politics around us. How are the economic structures stacked against us as workers, and how do we fight back? This course is suitable to trade unionists who want to better understand capitalism, the state, and the larger systems that exploit workers. Participants learn how to situate their everyday workplace struggles into the bigger political economic picture, and learn how to strategize accordingly. Light reading will be assigned ahead of the course.

Take Control of Your Benefits—Health & Welfare Benefits Bargaining - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

Wednesday, May 27 - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 per Non Affiliate

Facilitators: Jordan Grundy & Mike Porteous

Throughout the course, we focus on practical strategies to protect benefits from erosion over time and ensure members have the tools to maintain, and continually improve their plans. The ultimate goal of our program is simple: to empower your team to negotiate on equal footing with employers.

This course gives bargaining committees and union leaders the knowledge and tools they need to negotiate from a position of strength. We help bargaining teams identify weaknesses in current plans and spot opportunities for improvement. After taking this course, you will understand what information you must obtain from employers before bargaining begins, and how to verify the accuracy of the data provided.

We cover how health and welfare benefits are structured, what drives costs, and how to navigate employer cost cutting strategies. Additionally, you will know how to respond effectively to employer proposals, cost increases, and changes in carriers or coverage. You'll also learn about funding methods (including trusts), laws affecting benefit coverage, privacy considerations, and common benefit plan pitfalls to avoid.

**** Participants are encouraged to bring a copy of their benefits booklet and the Collective Agreement associated with that plan, if available. ****

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

Registration Open at www.vdvc.ca / Education

Canada Labour Code: Part II - IN PERSON at the Maritime Labour Centre

June 8, Monday - 9:30am to 4:00pm | Lunch included

Registration: 1 Day - \$200 per VDLC Affiliate / \$275 for Non-Affiliate

Facilitators: Craig Bavis & Rebecca Kantweg

The *Canada Labour Code* applies to federally regulated employees and workplaces, including those engaged in interprovincial or international shipping and navigation, interprovincial or international transportation by road, railway, ferry, pipeline, postal services, airports, telecommunications, broadcasting, etc. This course is designed to provide an understanding of key aspects of the *Code* and its application to the unions and employers covered by federal labour law. In this course we will focus on Part II of the *Code*, dealing with occupational health and safety in federally regulated workplaces. The most important sections will be reviewed, along with interpretations and key rulings that illustrate the application of the *Code*, including the internal complaint resolution process and the protections for workers against retaliation for exercising rights under the *Code*.

NOTE: Most workplaces in BC are provincially regulated for purposes of labour relations and subject to the BC Labour Relations Code. Provincially regulated sectors/industries include health, education, construction, retail, film, etc. Workers and union representatives in those sectors/industries should take the BC Labour Code which will be offered Fall 2026.

Drug & Alcohol Policies and Testing - ZOOM Video Conference

June 10, Wednesday - 1:00pm to 3:30pm

Registration: 2.5 Hours - \$60 per VDLC Affiliate / \$85 per Non-Affiliate

Facilitator: Daniel McBain

Drug and alcohol policies are found in most safety sensitive workplaces. The policies and their application engage significant privacy interests of workers. This course addresses when a drug and alcohol policy may run afoul of the law, when an employee may have the right to test, what it can test for, the factors that must be considered, and how the employer's right to test may be affected by an employee's privacy interests. We will review the key principles, leading cases on random, reasonable cause and post-incident testing, and address the practical implications for union representatives and workers.

Facilitator Bios

Michelle Anderson, CUPE

Michelle Anderson is a Representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) with extensive experience in bargaining municipal agreements. As a passionate young worker, Michelle is committed to securing significant gains for workers. She currently serves as a CUPE servicing representative, focusing on library and municipality assignments where she continues to advocate for fair treatment and improved working conditions for all union members.

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

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Craig Bavis, Victory Square Law

Craig Bavis has been a partner at Victory Square Law office since 2005. Craig has extensive experience in advising and representing unions in mediation, arbitrations and at Labour Relations Board hearings. He has appeared in all levels of court up to the BC Court of Appeal and Federal Court of Appeal. Craig primarily represents unions in the public and private sector across British Columbia in labour matters. Craig also works in Saskatchewan where he is involved in Charter Litigation.

Anjeannette Dawson, BCGEU

Spelexílh, **Anjeannette Dawson** is an Indigenous Educator, traditional wool weaver, knowledge keeper and BCGEU's Indigenous Education Officer. Anjeannette has over 35 years of work experience as well as a lifetime of lived experiences that she shares during her presentations. Anjeannette has been facilitating workshops all over BC to cross components, delivering keynote speeches and sharing her knowledge of pre-contact history, the effects of colonization and Residential Schools. Anjeannette is creating relationships to support the 800-900 Indigenous BCGEU members across the province, working and brainstorming with Indigenous colleagues to work together to be an advocate for Indigenous BCGEU members.

David Fleming, CUPE

David Fleming is a National Representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). David has facilitated labour education for both CUPE and the Canadian Labour Congress. He has experience bargaining and administering collective agreements in both the public and private sector. David currently works as CUPE's Legislative Coordinator in British Columbia.

Jordan Grundy, WE Consulting & Benefits

Jordan is a member of the United Steelworkers Local 1-1937. He has worked with Unions across Canada, assisting with benefit disputes, benefits bargaining, and managing plans for the past seven years. Analyzing collective agreements, benefit plans, proposals, and reports – he can lend a helping hand. Jordan also has extensive experience working with Employee Life and Health Trusts (ELHTs). He has a major sweet tooth and is an avid fan of the Vancouver Canucks.

Kayla Hilstob, SEIU Local 2

Kayla Hilstob is a Researcher at SEIU Local 2, and is a PhD Candidate at SFU's School of Communication, working on her dissertation on the political economy of digital infrastructure in Canada.

Rebecca Kantweg, Victory Square Law

Rebecca Kantweg (she/they) joined the firm as an associate in 2018, after articling and working in-house for a large union in British Columbia. Rebecca has represented clients at numerous mediations, and has appeared before labour arbitrators, the BC Labour Relations Board, the BC Court of Appeal, and the Federal Court of Appeal. Rebecca also has experience intervening in matters at the BC Court of Appeal and responding in BC Supreme Court to last minute applications for injunctions against picketing and protesting.

Alicia Massie, SEIU Local 2

Alicia Massie is the Coordinator of Campaign Research at SEIU Local 2 and has been an activist, researcher, and writer in the labour movement for over a decade. She is currently completing her doctoral degree in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, where her research examines the accessibility of government data through Freedom of Information requests and its application in progressive investigative research.

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

Registration Open at www.vdvc.ca / Education

Katherine Benson, Allevato Quail & Associates

Katherine is a member of the Law Society of British Columbia and the Law Society of Ontario. She earned her law degree from the University of British Columbia where she received multiple awards for her public interest and human rights work. She also holds a Bachelor of Social Sciences in Conflict Studies and Human Rights from the University of Ottawa.

Daniel McBain, Moore Edgar Lyster LLP

Daniel McBain is an Associate lawyer at Moore Edgar Lyster LLP. He practices labour, employment, human rights, and administrative law, with a particular emphasis on privacy and human rights law, including drug and alcohol testing and involving substance use disorders. In addition to litigating those issues, Daniel also provides training to union officials on drug and alcohol policies.

Andrew McKay, AM Law

Andrew McKay is private counsel with AM Law in BC and Ontario, specializing in criminal law. Former Toronto police officer and Assistant Crown Attorney in Toronto. Counsel to a number of police associations throughout Ontario on regulatory matters and Special Investigation Unit investigations. Previously acted as consultant/trainer to the Ministries of Labour in Ontario, BC and Alberta pertaining to Occupational Health and Safety Acts.

Leo McGrady, Koskie Glavin Gordon

Leo McGrady KC is counsel with Koskie Glavin Gordon. He specializes in labour law, human rights, criminal law, and libel law, all on behalf of unions and employees. Leo has taught these courses at the Faculty of Law UBC, and in the Labour Studies Programs at Capilano University and Simon Fraser University. He has been counsel on hundreds of trials, hearings and appeals throughout his career.

Caitlin O'Leary, O'Leary Law

Caitlin O'Leary has been a dedicated advocate for ill and injured workers since 2012. With over eight years of experience in advocacy at a major healthcare union, Caitlin brings a strong background in navigating complex systems on behalf of workers. Her expertise also includes health and welfare benefits policy, strategic communications, and member engagement. She is currently a workers' advocate at O'Leary Law, representing unionized workers in their Workers' Compensation claims.

Sarah O'Leary, O'Leary Law

Sarah O'Leary was called to the bar in 1981 and has primarily been practicing Workers' Compensation and disability related law for over 30 years. She has been a workers' advisor, a Vice-Chair at the Appeal Division, a staff lawyer at a major health care union, and practiced for 16 years at Rush Crane Guenther and Harrison O'Leary LLP. She is currently in private practice in Vancouver. Sarah has been teaching workers' compensation advocacy to labour unions for over three decades.

Mike Porteous, WE Consulting & Benefits

Mike is a member of the United Food & Commercial Workers Local 1518. He brings extensive experience in business and accounting with a focus on trusts and pensions. Previously, he served as Owner and CEO of both a telecommunications company and an information technology company. He also founded and operated an insurance brokerage before merging with WE Consulting & Benefits. Mike has been a licensed advisor and insurance nominee for more than eighteen years, working across all aspects of trusted, insured, and self-insured benefit plans.

VDLC Education - Spring 2026

Registration Open at www.vdvc.ca / Education

Tamara Ramusovic, Moore Edgar Lyster LLP

Tamara Ramusovic is a partner at Moore Edgar Lyster LLP. She represents trade unions, as well as non-union employees, in the areas of labour, employment, human rights, and administrative law. In addition to her work as counsel, Tamara is a frequent speaker and legal educator on various topics, including privacy law, federal labour law, and human rights and accommodation law.

Bal Sandhu, PEA - HESU Chapter

Bal Sandhu is the past president of the Professional Employees' Association - Hospital Employees' Staff Union, a position he was elected to in November 2023. He previously served on the HEU's Provincial Executive Board from January 2019 to February 2021, when he was hired to the HEU staff. He has previously served on the HEU's Provincial Executive Board. He has been active within his local serving in several positions, including Secretary-Treasurer, Chairperson, Shop Steward, Lead Steward and Occupational Health and Safety representative. Outside of his HEU work, Bal served for six years at 1st Vice-President of the Vancouver and District Labour Council and continues as a member-at-large.

Niki Schnurr, Hospital Employees' Union

Niki Schnurr joined the Hospital Employees Union WCB and Long-Term Disability Appeals team in 2021. She has previously worked with the labour law firm, Rush Crane Guenther, and as an advocate with Prisoners' Legal Services and the UBC Indigenous Community Legal Clinic.

Karen Segal, Allevato, Quail & Roy

Karen Segal is a union-side labour lawyer working at Allevato, Quail & Roy. She has experience working as in-house counsel at a large Ontario union, as well as working in non-profit human rights and feminist advocacy. Karen has represented unions and union members in many different sectors addressing a wide range of issues, from individual grievances to bargaining unit wide policy disputes. Karen is dedicated to progressive social change on behalf of working people and seeks to use her legal skills to advocate for fairness at work.

Adrienne Smith, Adrienne Smith Law

Adrienne Smith is a transgender human rights activist and social justice lawyer, called to the bar in British Columbia in 2014. They argued a BC human rights case which clarified employers obligations to recognize correct pronouns for transgender and non-binary workers. As a trade union activist, they advocate for transgender inclusion in our unions and workplaces. Adrienne is the litigation director at the Catherine White Holman Wellness Clinic where they give free legal advice, take on human rights cases, and notarize name and gender documents for trans people.

Pamela Yong, Hospital Employees' Union

Pamela Yong graduated from the UBC Faculty of Law in 2001 and was called to the B.C. Bar in 2002. She practiced civil litigation in Vancouver, including personal injury, real estate, and corporate law. In 2006, she moved to Toronto and worked almost six years with a mid-sized Toronto firm specializing in class action litigation. In 2012, she moved back to her hometown of Vancouver and was employed by Teamsters Locals 213 and 231 as their in-house Workers' Advocate. She has specialized in workers' compensation advocacy for over seven years. She recently joined the Hospital Employees Union in 2021 and assists members with their WCB and Long-Term Disability appeals. In her spare time, she enjoys running, hiking, dancing, Muay Thai kickboxing and travelling.

VDLC Spring 2026 Education Session INFORMATION PAGE

Pre-registration is required as course space is limited - registration is open to all, union membership is not necessary.

Payment can be made by credit card or invoice (your union must be an affiliate). If you wish your union to be invoiced please contact the VDLC at office@vdlc.ca or 604-254-0703. Many unions will pay or reimburse tuition. Some financial subsidies are available.

IN Person Class Location - Maritime Labour Centre 111 Victoria Drive, Vancouver. The building is wheelchair accessible. There is free parking; entrance to the lot is off of Pandora St. If using transit from Powell or Hastings, get off at Victoria Drive.

*Course Material and Zoom Links - For those classes that are held by zoom, you will receive any material and the zoom link a few days prior to the scheduled day of class. You will not receive it via our website or STRIPE. If you do not receive any material or the zoom link prior to the day of class, **PLEASE CHECK YOUR JUNK FOLDER** before you contact the office.*

If you have any questions, please email the office at office@vdlc.ca or call 604-254-0703.

CANCELLATION/REFUND POLICY

- ◆ You must notify the office of cancellation 72 HOURS prior to your class in order to receive a full refund. Due to limited seating, we often have a waitlist and this gives us the opportunity to fill the class.
- ◆ Any cancellation made with less than 72 HOURS notice will be subject to a cancellation/processing fee. If you purchased your registration through our website with your credit card and are cancelling with less than 72 hours notice, your refund will be processed through STRIPE and will incur a cancellation fee.
- ◆ NO SHOWS will be charged the FULL COURSE FEE - NO EXCEPTIONS (This includes classes held by Zoom Video Conference).

Email: office@vdlc.ca

Phone: 604-254-0703