



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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HEU summer school inspires and energizes local union activists

About 200 HEU activists gathered at the University of British Columbia last week for the union's in-residence summer school program.

Under the theme "Expanding our base of power: grassroots leadership development", members participated in a series of workshops to broaden their knowledge and understanding of diverse workplaces, learn creative ways to organize workers, build effective campaigns, and increase their own leadership capacity.

"We are all here to deepen our understanding of the challenges we face, to discover how to better engage members – all members – in the good work of our union, and to re-energize ourselves for the work ahead," said HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside during the opening plenary.

Whiteside also referred to the union's five-year plan and how summer school is a valuable way to move that work forward – including fostering deeper relationships, expanding members' capacity, mobilizing on workplace issues, and building greater equity across the union.

In his opening remarks, HEU president Victor Elkins said, "One of the best parts about summer school is that it is a great opportunity for our new or younger HEU activists to meet our veteran leaders and work together... We get to learn from each other, and take that knowledge back to our workplaces."

HEU financial secretary Donisa Bernardo moderated an "Organizing in today's world" panel with special guests talking about their leadership experiences, including Gail Stromquist, an Aboriginal educator, Adam Lynes-Ford, a campaigner at the BC Health Coalition, and Alejandra Lopez Bravo, an advocate for immigrant and refugee families.

Delegates were also inspired by a lively presentation on "high participation" organizing by Jane McAlevey, renowned author of *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell)*, and a thought-provoking discussion on equity, diversity and inclusion by Shakil Choudhury, award-winning educator and author of *Deep Diversity*.

On the final afternoon, members took their messages out into the community to speak to members of the public about the union's campaign work, including health and safety, living wages, seniors' care, and privatization (for-profit plasma).

Check the photos on HEU's Facebook and Twitter pages, and watch for coverage in the summer issue of the *Guardian*.

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