

POLICY NUMBER: 2.8	DATE ADOPTED: Jun 15/16
POLICY TYPE: General	DATE AMENDED:
POLICY TITLE: Conflict Management	

Conflict Management

Rationale

In any healthy organization interpersonal conflict is sure to arise. It is not possible to have large numbers of creative people working together without differences arising. Well managed conflict is a healthy thing. Poorly managed conflict can fester and cause ongoing problems. Conflict management is more of an art than a science so no policy will meet every need. This policy lays out the goals of conflict management, the principles that are to be maintained and some practical steps to be taken where appropriate.

Goals

The main goal of conflict management is to maintain Shuswap Theatre as a safe and respectful artistic community based on:

1. Respect
2. Fairness
3. Collaboration
4. Pursuit of excellence

Principles

1. Parties are expected to act in a way that is respectful toward all persons involved.
2. Decisions made by the board or other persons in authority will be taken only after the affected persons have had an opportunity to be heard.
3. In interpersonal conflicts the preferred action is to engage the conflicted parties in resolving the conflict themselves. This may involve mediation by a third party if necessary.
4. Just because someone feels they have been treated unjustly doesn't necessarily mean that they actually have been. It is often helpful to explore the aggrieved party's assumptions and reactions as well as the other party's behavior.
5. Conflicts are to be resolved at the lowest organizational level possible. The hierarchy below suggests the order of things to try before moving to the next level.
 - a. One-on-one between the persons experiencing the conflict
 - b. Appeal to a person with immediate authority (e.g. Stage Manager, Director, Producer)

- c. Appeal to the Board of Directors, normally through the President.
6. If a person's misbehavior is serious enough to be considered misconduct, it should be referred to the Board for action. Misconduct is characterized by a serious ethical breach or by behavior that constitutes a significant physical or emotional danger to others or threatens the perception that Shuswap Theatre is a safe place. The Board should be cautious in labeling anyone's behavior as misconduct, doing so only if truly necessary.
7. It is important to remember that a serious conflict may negatively affect bystanders and others who hear about it. Thus, it may be important to communicate the outcomes of conflict resolution to more than just the conflicted parties.

Actions by the Board

1. Get good information before making decisions:
 - a. Find out if the conflicted parties have followed the procedure under "Principles" and offer to meet with them (or arrange another appropriate person to do so). This step is not appropriate in the case of abusive behaviour.
 - b. Hear from all affected parties, including witnesses if appropriate. Often a personal interview is more helpful than a written statement, though that can also be helpful.
 - c. Try to be clear about the facts, but also consider people's perceptions and feelings.
2. Find out what kind of solution would satisfy the conflicted parties. (It may be simpler than you expect.)
3. At higher levels of conflict, the Board may consider hiring a skilled, outside mediator.
4. If action is to be taken which will negatively affect any person, ensure that the person has had an opportunity to speak to the decision (in person or in writing) before it is finalized.
5. In the case of misconduct, the Board may take any lawful action up to and including expulsion from the society. It is generally advisable to choose consequences that are only as strong as are necessary to solve the problem.
6. A hierarchy of consequences could include:
 - a. a verbal request for change in behaviour
 - b. a verbal reprimand
 - c. a written reprimand/request for change in behaviour
 - d. removal from a position held
 - e. expulsion from the society
7. After dealing with the matter, the Board should carefully consider who needs to be informed of the resolution and the best means of communication.

Conflicts Within a Production or Other Project

The following is a list of who to go to if experiencing a conflict with someone working on the same production or project. Common sense will tell whether the first person listed is the appropriate one.

1. If a show has opened, the **Stage Manager** is in charge and is therefore the first person to approach.
2. For an Actor, the **Director** is the person to approach before a show opens.
3. For a crew person, the **Producer** may be the most appropriate person to approach.
4. If the conflict involves any of the above three persons it may be best for all three to meet together. They may choose to invite a neutral party to attend.
5. The **Board**, through the President, should only be approached if
 - a. the above listed persons are unable to resolve the problem,
 - b. the perceived problem is with one of the above listed persons
 - c. the behaviour may constitute misconduct.