

A magazine for the United Steelworkers

December 2014

# USW@Work

## MISSING & MURDERED ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Tragedy Hits  
Steelworkers  
Communities



Official Publication of the United Steelworkers in Canada

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On the cover: Cindy Rich, a member of USW Local 9508 at Vale Nickel in Voisey's Bay, is from Natuashish, Labrador, where in 2013 her 21-year-old cousin Bernice was murdered, becoming one of over 1,000 aboriginal women and girls missing or murdered in Canada. Photo: Mike Coles

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# TIME 4 ACTION

Our union has always been on the side of justice, fairness and progressive change. The cover story of this issue of *USW@Work* is about how the tragedy of murdered and missing aboriginal women in Canada is a Steelworkers issue and our support for a long-overdue national inquiry.

It is disgraceful and inexplicable that the murder rate for aboriginal women is three-to-four times higher than for the rest of the population. Yet Stephen Harper's Conservatives have dismissed the issue as simply a crime, and repeatedly refused to launch an inquiry, despite provincial, national and international pressure to do so.

The ongoing tragedy of violence against aboriginal women is close to the heart of a number of Steelworkers. Activist Lucie Rochon, from USW Local 8922 in Quebec, hears almost daily from people who have lost a sister or another family member. Lucie believes "our role is to talk about this issue, to educate our members, people in our workplaces and our children."

We need to take action to stop the murder and disappearance of aboriginal women and girls. We need to know why and give families the forum they need. USW District 5 unanimously passed a resolution calling for a national inquiry at its 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly in November.

The USW's call for a national inquiry is echoed far and wide, including by the NDP Official Opposition and the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. Take action to support the call for an inquiry by sending the postcard included in this issue of *USW@Work*.

In this and other struggles, we know that our members' solidarity gives us power. Today, we are even stronger, with the merger of the



USW National Director Ken Neumann and TWU National President Lee Riggs.

12,000-member Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) with the USW. In early November, TWU members voted 73.7 per cent in favour of the merger.

TWU members across Canada work for telecommunications companies including TELUS and Shaw Communications, as well as employers in related sectors. Our newly merged union is poised to be a global leader in the telecommunications sector.

This merger is an example of a shared, positive vision for the labour movement: global, outward-looking and focused on concrete action. We are optimistic about the future and we're honoured by the votes cast by so many TWU members. We truly are stronger together. Welcome!

Solidarity continues to be strong for members of USW Local 9176 fighting for fairness at Crown Holdings in Toronto. The USW's radio ad campaign to support the strikers urges us to buy our beer in bottles, not cans. Read more on p. 7.

Through one-penny-an-hour deductions, many of our members contribute to the Steelworkers Humanity Fund. This year, our Humanity Fund contributions are making a difference for thousands of workers, families and communities abroad and at home. Read more on p. 12 about the Humanity Fund's many achievements, from Ebola prevention to supporting food banks across Canada.

Steelworkers know it takes patience and stamina to build support for progressive action. On the picket line, our rallying cry is 'One day longer!' It is time for action and we will triumph because we are stronger together.

In solidarity,

Ken Neumann  
National Director

## Yes to Merger

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## Call Inquiry Now

Action POSTCARD ENCLOSED



# Stronger Together

## TWU & USW MERGE

In a historic referendum vote, Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) members have given a massive thumbs-up to merging with the USW.

During a membership-wide, 24-day electronic balloting process, TWU members voted by a resounding 73.7 per cent margin to merge with the USW. Voter turnout topped 52 per cent – the highest for any vote in TWU history.

“This campaign has been a great display of democratic involvement and participation by our members,” TWU National President Lee Riggs said after the vote was counted on Nov. 7.

“This unprecedented level of participation and unity by our members will give us momentum as we head into collective bargaining in the new year.”



# Stronger Together

*“This unprecedented level of participation and unity by our members will give us momentum.”*

*– Lee Riggs*

The TWU represents 12,000 members across Canada working for telecommunications companies including TELUS and Shaw Communications, as well as employers in related sectors.

“This is a great step forward for our membership, our families and our communities. This merger will help us improve the working lives of our members. There is a real sense of unity and excitement about the future,” Riggs said.

“This merger will benefit USW and TWU members alike,” said Steelworkers National Director Ken Neumann.

“This merger is an example of a shared, positive vision for the labour movement: global, outward-looking, and focused on concrete action. We are optimistic about the future and we’re honoured by the votes cast by so many TWU members,” Neumann said.

“Together we are starting a new era for employees’

rights, for fairness at work and for sharing the telecom sector’s success that our members help to achieve,” said USW International President Leo W. Gerard.

“Through our combined strength and activism, we will renew and improve collective agreements and ensure our members have a voice in the decisions that affect them,” Gerard said.

## Merger Benefits

The merger agreement, effective Jan. 1, 2015, includes strong, mutual commitments around collective bargaining, education, organizing and legislative action.

TWU members now have access to more resources and support to stand strong when facing employers at the bargaining table, including the \$300-million USW Strike and Defense Fund.

*continued on next page*





Dimitrios Mariani, member of TWU Local 602 in Montreal, on Halloween encouraging members to support the TWU-USW merger.

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The USW's extensive education and training courses will allow TWU members to gain knowledge, confidence and the skills to protect members' rights. Additional training also will be offered in health and safety, bargaining, leadership and more.

The merger agreement also provides assistance with TWU legal costs and a \$1-million fund to support organizing efforts to welcome new telecommunications workers to the union.

The successful merger campaign was the result of hard work by TWU members, activists and leaders across the country, with support from many USW activists.

The campaign engaged members through home mailings, regional meetings, telephone town halls, webinars and extensive social media interaction.

### Ideas, Activism, Energy

This merger creates a more diverse and stronger union. It brings new ideas and activism – and an activist union is what the USW is always building. Our debates, campaigns and conventions will benefit from the TWU's diverse mix of younger and seasoned members from a wide range of backgrounds.

### Community Building

TWU and USW members live and work in many of the same communities across Canada.

Together we can strengthen the voice of working people from small towns to the urban centres of Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and Montreal. Our merged union's community activities will benefit from new voices – in municipal elections, local education issues and in regional labour councils and provincial labour federations.

### Greater Power to Take Action

This merger doubles USW membership in Alberta, where labour must build its power to defend workers' rights. The merger will almost double the number of USW members who work under the federal labour code, combining our strengths to oppose the Harper government's attempts to erode workers' rights.

### Helping Workers Join the Labour Movement

The USW is an organizing union. Over 4,000 new members join our union in Canada each year. The TWU's knowledge and experience in telecommunications and the USW's proven organizing success will be a great combination for new organizing in the telecom sector.

### Pride and Optimism

When our union grows through mergers like this one, it tells our members that they belong to a progressive and inclusive union that others want to join.

"There is a justifiable feeling of pride and optimism among our members," Riggs and Neumann said in a joint statement. "We are building a stronger, more diverse and more resilient union that is committed to fighting for a better future for our members and all working people." ■

# Beer Drinkers Support Campaign Against Union-Busting Crown Holdings

For Andrew Luccock, when it comes to enjoying his favourite beer these days, it's got to be in a bottle.

"After I heard what's been going on, I couldn't buy cans anymore. It would definitely leave a bitter aftertaste," says Luccock, a Toronto small business owner.

Luccock stopped buying canned beer after hearing radio ads supporting Toronto Steelworkers who have been on strike for 15 months against Crown Metal Packaging Ltd., a Canadian subsidiary of Crown Holdings.

The USW's radio ads, reaching one million listeners daily across Ontario, promote a consumer boycott of Crown cans but don't discourage purchases of beer – in bottles.

*If I can help these workers by choosing bottled beer, I'm happy to do it.*

Crown, one of the world's largest beer can manufacturers, forced the strike in September 2013 by demanding massive concessions from USW Local 9176 members.

Crown says it wants to get rid of most of its unionized employees even if the labour dispute is resolved – a shocking departure from Canadian labour relations norms. The USW has filed an unfair labour practice complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board, alleging Crown has tabled proposals designed to ensure rejection by union members.

Crown has been operating its Toronto factory with strikebreakers to make cans for major beer brands including Molson, Coors, Labatt, Budweiser and Moosehead.

The USW advertising campaign is being bolstered by public actions in Ontario, Quebec and the U.S. Strikers have displayed huge banners on highway overpasses during rush hour, urging drivers to buy bottled beer – not Crown cans. USW locals have "adopted" beer stores in their communities for demonstrations urging consumers to buy bottled beer.

Local 9176 members have been picketing and leafleting Crown's corporate headquarters in Philadelphia, in the neighbourhoods of Crown directors and at corporations connected to Crown directors.

Our union also has filed an official complaint at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, detailing how Crown is violating the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

Back on the picket line in Toronto, Local 9176 strikers are buoyed by public support for the Buy Bottles, Not Cans campaign.

As Andrew Luccock says, "If I can help these workers by choosing bottled beer, I'm happy to do it." ■ [www.takebacksnomore.ca](http://www.takebacksnomore.ca)



# STOP THE KILLINGS

## City by City, Province by Province

More and more Canadians are finding out what it really means to Stop the Killing, thanks to the steady national campaign by Steelworkers to get police and prosecutors to enforce the law on workplace death. But there is still much work to do.

That law is the Westray Law, the *Criminal Code* amendments passed unanimously by Parliament in 2004 to hold corporations and their directors criminally accountable for the death and injury of workers. Enforcement has been virtually nonexistent, despite 1,000 workplace deaths a year.

A resolution of support, advocated by USW members in their communities, has been passed by dozens of municipal councils. In British Columbia, the USW resolution was passed this summer by the Union of B.C. Municipalities, representing all cities and towns in the province.

“There are still some key municipalities across Canada whose support we need to gather,” said USW National Director Ken Neumann. “Like the law itself, enforcement is now a political issue that we must once again fight to achieve.”

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police last summer agreed to circulate campaign materials.

## Justice Ministers Now Aware

Last May, Neumann and Western Canada Director Stephen Hunt met with Federal Justice Minister Peter MacKay to discuss the campaign and get his commitment to enforcing the law that he was instrumental in making a reality.

MacKay agreed to bring the issue to the October 2014 meeting of federal-provincial-territorial justice ministers. It's final communiqué included:



Stephen Hunt, USW District 3 Director and Ken Neumann, USW National Director with Justice Minister Peter MacKay (middle).





Brian Fitzpatrick and Briana and Wendy Fram, family members of Sam Fitzpatrick and Jordan Fram, two Steelworkers who were killed on the job.

Ministers agreed to continue working collaboratively to share best practices to improve the investigation and enforcement of existing federal and provincial laws to ensure workplace safety for Canadians. Ministers agreed to engage relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

“We intend to make sure this ‘agreement’ by ministers results in the action required to ensure that police and prosecutors investigate and lay charges properly and where necessary,” said Neumann. “The provinces must now step up to the plate.”

## Hearing from Families

More than 200 delegates to this fall’s USW Health, Safety and Environment Conference had a chance to renew their commitment to the campaign and to hear first-hand from families whose loved ones died on the job.

The Fram family from Sudbury, Ont., articulately expressed their grief at the death of their son and brother Jordan who was killed in 2011 at Vale’s Stobie Mine. Tammy Savinkoff re-told the horrific details of the 2008 death of her father, John Wilson, who drowned when the improperly modified excavator he was operating overturned in a water-filled sump. And Brian Fitzpatrick is still fighting for justice for his son, Sam, killed in 2009 at a site operated by Kiewit Corp.

The stories are all unique, yet the pain and lack of justice are depressingly familiar.

## Telling Their Story to the Nation

Just days after the conference, Global TV’s public affairs program, 16-by-9, ran a documentary featuring the USW

campaign in the context of two fatal sawmill explosions in 2012 that killed four workers – three USW members and a well-liked supervisor.

On the night of Jan. 20, a fireball shot into the air at the Babine Sawmill in Burns Lake, B.C. Two workers were killed. One of them, Robert Luggi, had texted his wife just moments before the explosion, asking her to pray for him as he went to investigate something in the mill.

An investigation by WorkSafeBC said the accident was preventable. Management was well aware that the dust-collection system was insufficient for the size of the operation.

Then in April, a blast ripped through the Lakeland Mills sawmill in Prince George, B.C. Again, two workers were killed. Again, wood dust was to blame.

No charges were laid in either case.

## Never Stop Until the Law is Enforced

Directors Neumann and Hunt vow that the campaign for enforcement will continue until there is clear direction to enforce the Westray amendments and there is demonstrably better coordination between law enforcement and regulations found in occupational health and safety law.

“Until that time, we will continue to expose the injustice and cruelty that have prevented thousands of Canadian families from moving forward with their lives after a workplace death,” Hunt said.

“The tears will not stop, but neither will our determination to see that justice is done.”

Sign the petition at [www.stopthekilling.ca](http://www.stopthekilling.ca). ■

# 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly in Quebec

## *Proud to be Steelworkers!*

**Quebec Steelworkers** marked a historic milestone in November, celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly in Montreal, steps away from the site of their first assembly in 1965.

Under the theme Proud of our Roots, Proud of our Activism, Proud to be Unionized, delegates committed to building on five decades of progressive activism.

Every elected director of USW District 5 over the last 50 years was on hand for the conference opening – Jean Gérin-Lajoie, Clément Godbout, Lawrence McBrearty, Arnold Dugas, Michel Arsenault and current Director Daniel Roy.

Annual directors' reports from years past illustrated the union's evolution over five decades and the unrelenting progressive activism of Steelworkers in defence of the rights and dignity of workers.

## Battle for the Middle Class

Daniel Roy delivered an impassioned report on the role of the labour movement in building a strong middle class. He cut to the core of the rhetoric used by right-wing politicians in Quebec and Ottawa to curry favour with working people while at the same time adopting policies that negatively affect the middle class.

"The conservative right wing wants us to believe that we no longer have a choice, that public services must be cut. They want to force their choices on us – favouring the rich, sucking money to the top, crushing working families and the middle class," Roy said.

"We are putting the conservative and liberal right-wingers and their media lapdogs on notice: in life, we always have a choice! We choose to defend and actually help the middle class."

USW activists were urged to get involved in the next federal election campaign to defeat the Conservatives, as well as to advocate against the austerity cuts being imposed by the Couillard Liberal government in Quebec.

Delegates also heard from some of Quebec's leading socio-economic researchers, explaining the positive impacts of unions on the economy and society, the benefits of progressive taxation and debunking the merits and necessity of government austerity. ■



Delegates to the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of USW District 5 received a copy of the book *Les Métallos du Québec, tome 2* (Quebec Steelworkers, Part II). It chronicles Quebec Steelworkers' history from 1981 to 2014 and serves as the follow-up to a book on the union's history prior to 1981, written by Jean Gérin-Lajoie, the union's first elected director in Quebec.

LA 50<sup>E</sup> ASSEMBLÉE ANNUELLE DU SYNDICAT DES MÉTALLOS • DU 19 AU 21 NOVEMBRE

# FIERS

de nos racines • de notre action • d'être syndiqués

# 50<sup>e</sup>



# 30 Years of Global Solidarity

## Steelworkers Humanity Fund supports thousands of families and communities – abroad and at home

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund has marked its 30<sup>th</sup> year with one of the most-ambitious development and relief programs of its proud history.

Created in 1985, the Humanity Fund supported thousands of workers, families and communities – abroad and at home – in 2014. From the clothing sweatshops of

Bangladesh, to hazardous mines in South America, to overburdened food banks across Canada, here is a sample of the fund's work this year:



A \$154,000 contribution in November to 71 food banks in communities across the country where USW members live and work. Photo: The Stop Food Bank



Support for a project by the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity to strengthen workers' rights, improve health and safety and working conditions and increase the role of unions.



Support for the Peruvian Miners Federation to rebuild an effective union to address urgent health and safety issues in an industry marked by increases in occupational accidents, diseases and fatalities.



Supporting Bolivia's Centre for the Promotion of Mining in a project to improve the living and working conditions of Bolivians who work as co-operative miners in dangerous circumstances to try to eke out a living.



Supporting a project in which USW, Brazilian and Italian activists are collaborating to train Colombian union members trying to improve workplace health and safety in Colombia.



A \$15,000 contribution to an Ebola prevention program for workers, their families and communities in Liberia, as well as a \$10,000 contribution to Doctors Without Borders. Photo: Médecins Sans Frontières



A \$15,000 contribution to Oxfam Canada to support ongoing humanitarian work in Gaza. Photo: Oxfam Canada



A \$23,000 contribution to Oxfam Canada to support emergency water, sanitation and hygiene work in South Sudanese refugee camps in Ethiopia. Photo: Oxfam Canada



A \$20,000 contribution to the Red Cross to support families and communities recovering from widespread flooding in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Photo: The Canadian Red Cross

# Steelworkers Experience Tragedy of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

Steelworkers part of growing network of families, friends and coworkers of missing and murdered aboriginal women

## Two Labrador Sisters Murdered

Nearly 20 years ago, Steelworker Herman McLean and his wife Linda got married. In the wedding party was Linda's seven-year-old niece, Loretta Saunders, a flower girl delighted to be part of a warm and happy family event.

*continued on next page*

Cindy Rich, a member of USW Local 9508 at Vale Nickel in Voisey's Bay, is from Natuashish, Labrador, where in 2013 her 21-year-old cousin Bernice was murdered, becoming one of over 1,000 aboriginal women and girls missing or murdered in Canada.





## MISSING & MURDERED WOMEN

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The extended Saunders-McLean family is a mixed, largely Inuit family in Labrador, close-knit and supportive of one another. Herman is a mill operator and a member of USW Local 9508 at the Vale-owned Voisey's Bay Nickel.

In February 2014, 26-year-old Loretta became a terrible statistic – one of more than 1,180 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls over the last 30 years. Ironically, she was set to graduate from Saint Mary's University and was doing her thesis on the issue. She was also pregnant.



Cindy Rich and Herman McLean in front of Parliament Hill during the 2014 Sisters in Spirit vigil

Loretta was missing for several days before her body was found on Feb. 26. Two people have been charged in her murder, the details of which are gruesome and disturbing.

During a preliminary hearing last summer, Herman could not hold back his grief and anger when the accused were led into the courtroom. He lunged towards them and was restrained by police, who removed him from the courtroom and placed him in temporary custody. Loretta's death remains a raw and open wound for the entire family.

"I will never be the same after what I heard about how my niece was killed," says Herman. "And her father will likely never recover from the brutality of this senseless crime.

"The trial is still to come and no matter what will come from that, our pain will continue. Real justice is a long way off."

In the northern Labrador Innu community of Natuashish, cousins Cindy and Bernice Rich grew up together and shared a special bond of family and friendship. Like Herman, Cindy is a member of Local 9508 and is a warehouse technician at Voisey's Bay.

In June 2013, Bernice, who also worked in Voisey's Bay, went missing. Her body was found in another Innu community, Sheshatashiu, on June 14. She had been brutally beaten and murdered. She was 21 and had been planning to go back to school.

"She was gone and I just did not want to hear it," says Cindy. "She was a loving and caring person. We think about her all the time."

In Western and Northern Canada, the USW counts many First Nations people among the union's members. Not all Steelworkers in these often-resource-based communities are family members of the murdered and missing, but they are often part of the same community and are affected.

"Whether it is a direct or indirect relationship, all of us are affected and all of us want to live in safe communities," says Frank Everitt, President of USW Local 1-424.

Members of his local live and work along what has come to be known as the Highway of Tears, the 800-kilometre stretch of B.C.'s Highway 16 that runs between Prince George and Prince Rupert. Many believe the number of women killed over the last 30 years along the highway exceeds 40.

"We acknowledge the families and friends of the victims of the Highway of Tears, as well as all the other families across Canada that are missing their loved ones," says a website, [www.highwayoftears.ca](http://www.highwayoftears.ca), an initiative by the Carrier-Sekani Family Services. "It is their perseverance that brings us together and why we continue to identify violence against women, specifically aboriginal women, as an issue that affects us all.

"Communities along the highway share a situation of colonization resulting in experiences of poverty, violence, cultural genocide, residential school impacts, addictions and displacement from land."

# MISSING & MURDERED WOMEN



Ghislain Picard, Interim National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations: "Government has misplaced priorities."

In Quebec, Steelworkers activist and member of the Cree Nation Lucie Rochon is one of the labour movement's leading advocates for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

"I hear almost every other day from people who lost a sister or a cousin or some other member of their family," says Rochon, President of USW Local 8922.

"We must send a clear message of solidarity to aboriginal women who are fighting for their rights and for an end to the violence they are subjected to," she says.

## Oct. 4, A Day for Remembrance

Every Oct. 4, more than 200 vigils in towns and cities across Canada are held to honour the missing and murdered, support grieving families, provide opportunities for healing and build a movement for social change. Called 'Sisters in Spirit,' these events have grown year by year as more family members become statistics.

With its many aboriginal members, Local 9508 understands the significance of Sisters in Spirit. So much so that the local funded Cindy Rich and Herman McLean to come to Ottawa for an Oct. 4 vigil on Parliament Hill.

"It felt good to be with people who share our pain," said Herman. "I know I will never be the same after what our family has been through."

"No one knows why our people are targeted in this way," said Cindy. "That is why there must be an inquiry. It would open some eyes in Canadian society that right now are closed. It's all about stopping these tragedies from happening. Too many have died."

Ghislain Picard, interim National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said at the Ottawa vigil that the federal government has misplaced priorities.

"Why does the federal government monitor human rights abuses around the world and ignore abuse in our own country?" asked Picard. "Justice is a fundamental human right, even in Canada."

## National Inquiry Now

As more people are touched, directly and indirectly, by the growing list of lost women and girls, the basic facts are stark indeed. Indigenous women and girls make up 4.3 per cent of the total female population of Canada, but make up 11.3 per cent of the murdered and missing. Aboriginal women are three times more likely to be victims of violence than non-aboriginal women.

An RCMP report released in May 2014 confirmed the disproportionate number of missing and murdered aboriginal women but at the last minute removed a recommendation for a public inquiry, according to the aboriginal news source Windspeaker.

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## MISSING & MURDERED WOMEN

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USW National Director Ken Neumann said the union strongly supports the call for a national inquiry.

In November delegates to the 50<sup>th</sup> annual conference of USW District 5 (Quebec) unanimously approved a resolution – championed by Lucie Rochon – calling for an inquiry.

A national inquiry also has been demanded by the NDP Official Opposition in Parliament and recommended by James Anaya, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Neumann noted.

"Even though some of these crimes result in an arrest, it is appalling and unacceptable that aboriginal women and girls can vanish or be murdered without asking why and how and without giving families the forum they need," he said.

"It is an international disgrace for the government of Canada to reject an inquiry and allow this open wound to grow."

### Federal Government in Denial

The federal government continues to deny the need for a national inquiry, saying such analysis is not needed. The government says action is what is required. However, there is no 'action' and aboriginal women are asking, "Am I next?"

"(The government's refusal to have an inquiry) would be more palatable if a law-and-order government, which

preaches the rights of victims, could explain why it is so reluctant to give families who lost loved ones a tiny bit of closure that could come from speaking publicly if they felt their concerns were not given priority by law enforcement agencies," said *Toronto Star* Ottawa correspondent Tim Harper (no relation to the prime minister).

### Take Action Today

"If there is one foundation upon which our union is built, it is that of equity and justice," says Neumann.

"Our own members are victims of this government's refusal to seriously address the profound impact of 30 years of murders and disappearances among First Nations people. That is neither just nor equitable, that's why we support a national inquiry."

Act now to add your voice to the growing demand for an inquiry. Fill out the attached, postage-free postcard, mail it in and tell the federal government we can't wait any longer. ■

*"I will never be the same after what I heard about how my niece was killed."*

*- Herman McLean*



Fierce advocate for an inquiry : USW Local 8922 President Lucie Rochon, with fellow USW activist Tshakapesh Jérôme of Local 7493.

**Steelworker Lucie Rochon** is a fierce advocate for an inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women.

In November the president of the largest Steelworkers local in Canada rose on the floor at USW District 5's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly to present a resolution calling on her union to do more to combat violence against aboriginal women.

"We must send a clear message of solidarity to aboriginal women who are fighting for their rights and for an end to the violence they are subjected to," Rochon, a member of the Cree Nation and President of 13,000-member USW Local 8922, said in a passionate defence of her resolution.

Steelworkers activists from across Quebec passed the resolution unanimously.

"The tragedy of murdered and missing aboriginal women is an issue that I take personally, it's close to my heart," Rochon said in an interview.



## MISSING & MURDERED WOMEN



Photo : Bill Keay/Vancouver Sun

Monica Jack's father, Philip Swakum, defrosting the ground ahead of her burial ceremony. Dozens of girls and women, many of them native, have disappeared from or been found murdered along B.C. highways.

"I haven't lost anyone in my immediate family, but I hear almost every other day from people who lost a sister or a cousin or some other member of their family."

Rochon, whose local represents security guards across Quebec, has been a USW activist for 12 years. As her fierce advocacy for a public inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women demonstrates, she has embraced the role of labour, social justice and human rights activist.

"As a union activist, I think our role is to talk about this issue, to educate our members, people in our workplaces and our children. We need to build solidarity among unions, aboriginal people and aboriginal communities, to help them to organize, to fight for their rights and to achieve their potential."

Rochon also is working to build greater solidarity to achieve political change, given the refusal of Stephen Harper's Conservative government to launch a national inquiry.

"An inquiry will delve into issues that this government doesn't want to confront – violence, poverty, education. It's all part of a vicious circle that we want to get out of," she says.

"But we all know Mr. Harper's famous quote, that this isn't a sociological issue. Well, when the murder rate for aboriginal women is almost four times higher than for the rest of the population, that is a sociological issue.

"Aboriginal people need answers on what happened, why it happened and what has to be done so it does not keep happening.

"So I think that in the 2015 election we have to stand together and send a clear message to the Conservatives. We have to come together to give Mr. Harper a good swift kick and get rid of him. It won't be one group or one province, it will have to be people coming together across the country." ■

# Steelworkers Vote: The Municipal Edition



The United Steelworkers has taken its successful Steelworkers Vote campaign to the local level in British Columbia. Municipal elections for mayor, councillor and school trustee took place in every city throughout the province on November 15.

Along with supporting progressive candidates, the union was proud to support 17 USW members running

for office. District 3 Director Stephen Hunt says the large number of candidates indicates the success of the Steelworkers Vote program.

“Steelworkers Vote is essential at every level because we want to ensure that the people making decisions where we live and work are looking out for the interests of working people,” said Hunt. ■

The disaster of the Mount Polley tailings pond failure demonstrates once again the dangers of leaving regulation of the mining industry and enforcement of worker health and safety in the hands of the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines.

On August 4, 2014, a failure of the Mount Polley tailings pond in Likely, B.C., saw 10 million cubic metres of water released into the surrounding area. USW District 3 Director Stephen Hunt says the union responded to the disaster quickly.

“Our union was immediately on the ground, responding and supporting

all of those who have been affected by the tailings pond failure. Mount Polley is not only where our members work, but the surrounding area is where our members live and raise their families,” says Hunt. “We remain concerned about the failure’s impact on workers, local communities, First Nations and the environment.”

Hunt is also raising concern about the combination of both the regulation of the mining industry and the promotion of the industry under one roof, including jurisdiction over worker health and safety.

It’s a case of the fox guarding the henhouse. Instead of being covered by WorkSafeBC, workers in the mining industry have to depend on the Ministry of Energy and Mines, which has shown very little interest in worker safety or industry regulation.

The Steelworkers are calling on the government and all stakeholders to review the current regime and place worker health and safety under the purview of WorkSafeBC and environmental regulation under the Ministry of Environment. ■

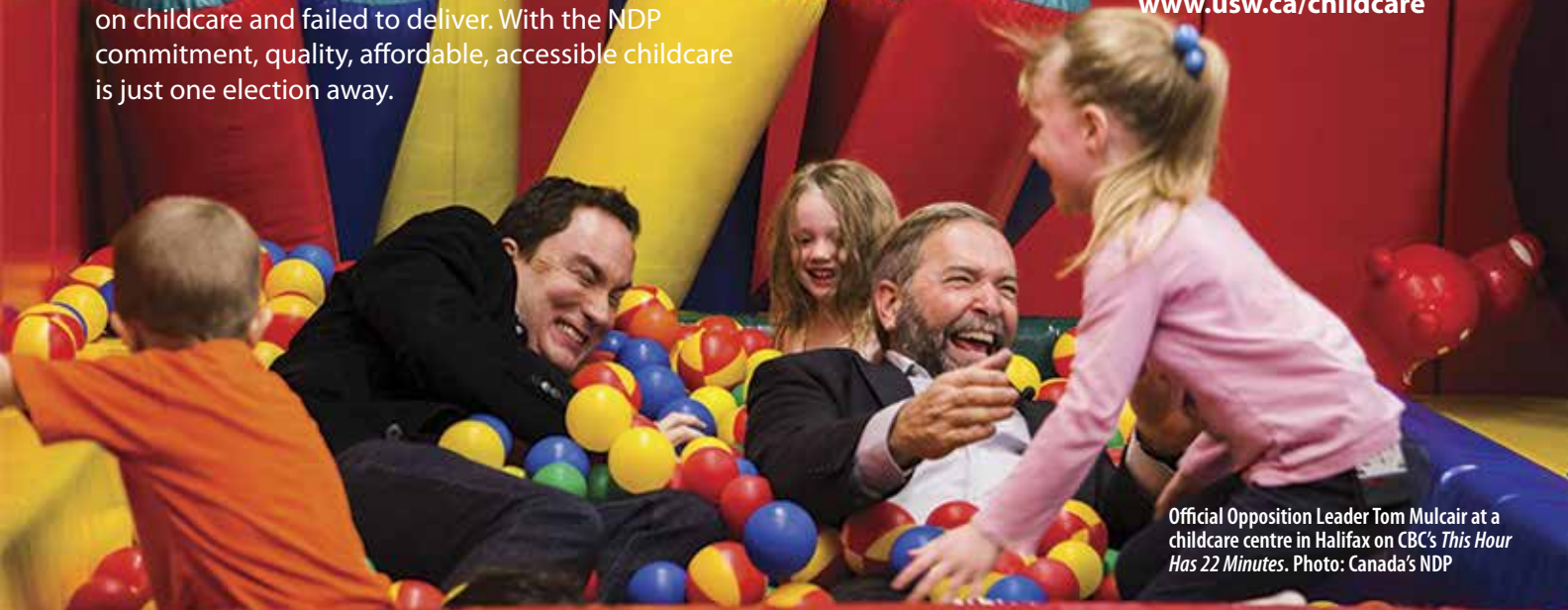
# Mount Polley Disaster

## Highlights Regulatory Conflict

**Thomas Mulcair** and the New Democrats are making affordable childcare a key plank of the NDP platform for the 2015 federal election. Mulcair's plan for \$15-a-day childcare will benefit kids, families, women and our economy. For two decades, Liberals and Conservatives have repeatedly promised action on childcare and failed to deliver. With the NDP commitment, quality, affordable, accessible childcare is just one election away.

Steelworkers are on board with the NDP's plan – we're working with other unions and advocacy groups on the Rethink Child Care campaign to put childcare back on the agenda. ■

[www.ndp.ca/childcare](http://www.ndp.ca/childcare)  
[www.usw.ca/childcare](http://www.usw.ca/childcare)



Official Opposition Leader Tom Mulcair at a childcare centre in Halifax on CBC's *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Photo: Canada's NDP

## NDP Proposes Affordable Childcare

### Alexandria Moulding Employees Choose USW



Our New Steelworkers. Alexandria Moulding's Bargaining Committee: Francis Boucher, Luc Menard, René Troost, David Lipton, Gary Menard and Bernard Carriere.

**Following** a successful organizing campaign, there are 250 new Steelworkers in Alexandria, Ont., just northeast of Cornwall. They work for Alexandria Moulding, Canada's largest manufacturer of mouldings and other wood products for the residential market.

The workers were dissatisfied with their representation from the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), and turned to the USW for help.

A dedicated committee of nine employees collected cards and built support among co-workers, despite a misinformation campaign by CLAC. This solid groundwork led to a vote of 80 per cent to join the Steelworkers in September.

"We welcome these hard-working new members who will be a great addition to our union," said Marty Warren, USW District 6 Director. "These employees reached out to our union for support and a greater voice in the workplace and that's what we will deliver."

If you're in the market for great wood products for home improvements, look for Alexandria Moulding products at Home Depot and most local building stores across Canada. ■

NATIONAL UPDATE  
Steelworkers Union Defends Exploited Workers

Scandals Leave Conservatives  
Scrambling for Damage Control

## Temporary Worker Scandals Mount

# Conservatives Mired in Temporary Worker Scandals

*USW leads charge for progressive change as abuses mount*

**Steelworkers** continue to campaign for an overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) as revelations mount of abuses affecting foreign and Canadian workers and aboriginal communities.

The Conservative government was again sent into damage-control mode as media reports cited more egregious examples of abuses, including employers using the TFWP to fill low-paying jobs in communities with high unemployment, particularly among aboriginal people.

The Conservatives allowed the pipeline of exploited foreign workers to keep flowing, while resorting to piecemeal measures whenever scandals arise, the revelations show.

In one such case, a business owner was allowed to import foreign workers to work in a cafeteria in a First Nations community beset by

high unemployment. There was no requirement to invest in training or recruiting unemployed aboriginals or other Canadians.

Media reports also reveal how, despite numerous scandals, the Conservatives have failed almost completely to investigate TFWP abuses.

While allowing employers to recruit hundreds of thousands of temporary workers in recent years, the Harper government actually employs fewer investigative officers than it did six years ago.

Despite the explosion in temporary workers and shocking reports of abuses, the government has sanctioned only seven employers for non-compliance with the rules and only four employers have been blacklisted from the program.

For years, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have been guilty of a complete lack of oversight of the TFWP. They have allowed widespread exploitation of foreign workers while turning their backs on the need to invest in training and recruitment of Canadians, particularly unemployed youth and aboriginals.

Steelworkers continue to work with aboriginal communities, exploited foreign workers and our progressive political allies to demand a complete overhaul of the TFWP and real investment in training and sustainable job creation. The USW also advocates that temporary workers, who essentially came to Canada as indentured servants, be granted open work permits and the right to apply for permanent residency and citizenship. ■

[www.everyoneschance.ca](http://www.everyoneschance.ca)

SUNNY HIGH 15  
TODAY'S WEATHER

Disposable Worker Pipeline Expands

Temporary Workers:  
A Tale of Abuse and Exploitation