

■ The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour

# LABOUR REPORTER

THE VOICE OF SASKATCHEWAN'S WORKING FAMILIES SINCE 1956



FALL  
2015

## • BUILDING ALLIES •

SFL president Larry Hubich talks about building allies, reaching out, and strengthening labour's connections to community.



## FEDERAL ELECTION: AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW

AFTER THE LONGEST election campaign in modern Canadian history, voters will go to the polls on October 19, 2015. Workers and their unions have endured nearly a decade of attacks and cutbacks by Stephen Harper and his Conservative government.

Thus, workers across the country are organizing in their communities in hopes of electing a government that will properly fund public healthcare, create much need childcare spaces, guarantee retirement security, and invest in good jobs.

In Saskatchewan, the Labour Movement views the federal election as an opportunity to grow and reach out.

"Between elections the Saskatchewan Fed-

eration of Labour and all the unions in the province do a lot of great work building stronger communities," said Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) president Larry Hubich, "but during elections, such as the current federal election, we have a powerful opportunity to reach out to groups of people on specific issues and see what we can do by working together," he added.

In October of 2014 the SFL launched a new community organizing initiative – Project: Community – that works with community organizations and members, workers, students, and anybody that wants to be involved with creating an even better province.

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Your go-to list of Twitter handles

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The current federal election really does focus people's attention on important issues, and we think that reality provides us an opportunity to grow as a progressive movement.

— LARRY HUBICH

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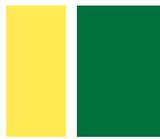
That initiative will facilitate much of the planned outreach during the current, and future, elections.

“Project: Community really is a good example of Saskatchewan’s Labour Movement’s commitment to ongoing ally-building and engagement,” said Hubich. “Through this initiative, and our organizers, we’ve managed to build our capacity as a movement to then go out and continue the kind of coalition- and consensus-building that the Labour Movement is historically very effective at.

“The current federal election really does focus people’s attention on important issues, and we think that reality provides us an opportunity to grow as a progressive movement,” he added.

If you would like to be involved with Project: Community on an ongoing basis, please sign-up at [www.projectcommunity.ca](http://www.projectcommunity.ca).

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



# WE NEED ALLIES TO WIN

BY KENT PETERSON  
SFL STRATEGIC ADVISOR

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT is one of the most successful, democratic, and long-standing movements in our modern history. Workers have been able to accomplish any number of astonishing victories – victories that didn’t come about by asking nicely. Throughout history workers have mobilized, strategized, withdrew their labour, and protested to achieve the many successes we are so proud of today. You’ve likely heard of them before: ending child labour, the creation of workplace safety standards, the formation of maternity leave; it was the workers’ movement that brought us the weekend, the minimum wage, and in many ways Canada’s flagship social welfare programme – Medicare. A more recent addition to this list includes the constitutional right to strike – thanks to Saskatchewan’s Labour Movement.

It’s an impressive roster of laws and programmes that have helped level the economic and social playing fields. So impressive, in fact, that sometimes we can be lulled into a sense of believing we did it by ourselves.

Each battle we fought and each victory we won came about as a result of intensive outreach and ally-building. Workers and their unions simply cannot win in isolation – they never have, and they never will. Only by including others and practicing reciprocal solidarity does the Labour Movement have any hope of carrying forward with the march of progress.

There are several topical threats facing workers today. One such threat is the attacks by right-wing governments at all levels on organizing rights, and union rights. The federal government and many provincial governments have passed laws that attack these rights, and they are designed not just to weaken unions, but to destroy them. It’s scary stuff. When strategizing to counter these attacks, we ought not overlook the significance of building allies with those who rely most on unions in the first place – marginalized workers.



It is true that gay and trans\* workers need union protection more than what some might call the “average worker”. LGBTQ workers are so easily harassed, discriminated against, and summarily fired by employers that a union isn’t seen as a nice perk, but rather it is necessary for even a very basic level of economic possibility. So, when unions are taking on right-wingers to defend workers’ rights, they must properly engage their LGBTQ members and the broader community in a way that makes sense.

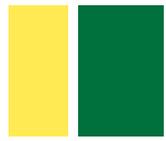
It’s about building allies, and when it then comes time for unions to be there in defense of LGBTQ rights – they better be there, and not just with a donation but with people in the streets. That’s what I like to call “reciprocal solidarity”.

The above example using LGBTQ workers can be extended to all marginalized workers and non-workers including, but not limited to: women, First Nations and Métis folks, racialised people, and those with ability issues.

The Labour Movement cannot, and should not, go it alone. When unions are strategising about how to defend workers’ rights and expand the progressive agenda they should not just consider what they can do, but rather what they can do in coordination with others. Going it alone always has, and always will, result in fantastic failure..

@ActivistKent

## EDUCATION



# OUTREACH FOCUS OF NEXT SFL CONVENTION

THE SFL'S 60TH annual convention will take place October 21 to 23 this year in Saskatoon, and its theme is "Building. Growing. Protecting rights."

This is the first convention since the SFL achieved a major victory at the Supreme Court of Canada against the Government of Saskatchewan – winning the constitutional right to strike for all Canadians. As such, part of the convention theme honours that, and other, instances of protecting rights throughout the last 60 years of the SFL. The convention theme also focuses on building our movement and growing outwards.

After starting the convention with a recognition of being on Treaty 4 land and a reading of the Statement on a Harassment Free Convention, delegates will be treated to a panel of experts and activists on the topic of "Engaging Diverse Communities". During the second day of convention delegates will hear a federal election de-brief and then a lively debate between professors Charles Smith and David McGrane on the topic "Doing Politics in the Labour Movement – Partisan or Not?"

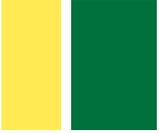
the convention will also hear from the SFL's Community Organizer, Paige Kezima, about the exciting organizing initiatives she has been part of, as well as an update about the Own It! campaign from SFL Strategic Advisor Kent Peterson. Finally, there will be a speaker on the convention's theme "Building. Growing. Protecting rights." – stay tuned!

Early bird registration for the convention, as well as the resolutions deadline, is September 21, 2015. Registrations can still be sent in after that date, but the fee will have increased. SFL affiliates are entitled to special young worker delegates, but this does not preclude affiliates from listing young workers on their main delegate registration list as well. Please see the convention section of [www.sfl.sk.ca](http://www.sfl.sk.ca) for additional information.



ABOVE: Jacqueline Anaquod from Sisters in Spirit presents about missing and murdered Indigenous women at the 2014 SFL convention.

LEFT: Nora Loreto, author of *From Demanded to Organized*, presents about engaging young workers at the 2014 SFL convention.



# SFL CAMPERS LEARN TO

THE 27TH ANNUAL SFL Kids' Summer Camp took place from August 9 to 15 this year at Cedar Lodge on Blackstrap Lake - a new location for the camp.



NEARLY 60 YOUNG people from across Saskatchewan participated at the annual camp, as well as 23 staff members and volunteers - including camp councillors, nurses, camp directors, recreation staff, and Youth Activity Coordinators.

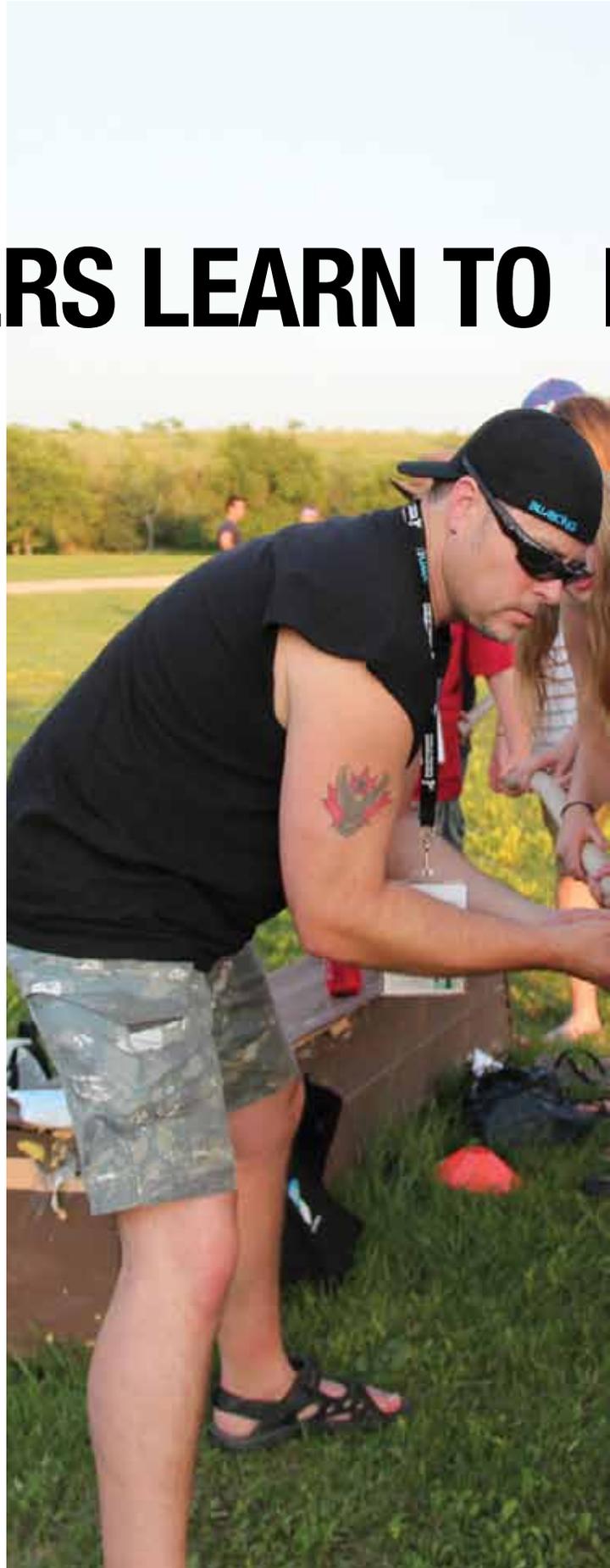
"For the first time in the camp's history we changed locations," said SFL Kids' Summer Camp Coordinator, Sarah Cibart, "as with any big change you're never sure if it will work out well, but I can say without a doubt that everything went perfectly and the kids had a lot of fun," she added.



In addition to recreational activities, beach time, camp fires, and other fun things, the campers participated in short issue sessions.

The sessions included topics such as learning about different forms of discrimination and what to do about them, expressing yourself through music and poetry, how to work safely as young people, and how to follow your passions in life.

The latter session was pre-



BE

# EFFECTIVE ALLIES



sented by travel-enthusiasts and documentary filmmakers Dustin Corkery and Adrian Traquair.

There was also a session about how campers and other young people can be effective allies to people in their communities. The session was presented by two camp councillors.

“The workshop goals were to provide an understanding about what an ally is, increase awareness of why allies are important, and to encourage effective ally behaviour,” said Cibart.

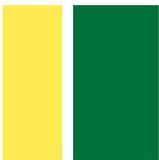
“These are really bright and engaged young people, and in their everyday lives – whether it be at work or in school or in their extracurricular activities – they will encounter folks who are

gay or lesbian, trans\*, First Nations, have ability issues, and so on. Thus, it’s important that they have an understanding of how they can support these groups of people and other marginalized communities,” she added.

Cibart later added that workshops and sessions of this nature help create the progressive and accepting culture of the camp as a whole.

The camp accepts applications from young people aged 13 to 16 – keep a watch for next year when the application form is released.

Furthermore, if you or someone you know is interested in being a councillor at the camp please contact the SFL Kids’ Summer Camp Coordinator in the spring of 2016.



## MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY'RE AT

BY TRACEY MITCHELL

*This article was originally published in the Sept/Oct 2015 issue of **Briarpatch Magazine** (Vol. 44, No. 5)*

WHEN I WAS A university student, I had two distinct sets of friends – there were the people that I lived with and partied alongside in residence, and there were those with whom I did social justice and environmental organizing.

I was excited when a group I was involved with, The Sierra Youth Coalition, held a beer night fundraiser because it provided an opportunity to bring my two sets of friends together. “All you can drink beer for \$5?” my friends in residence said. “What’s the catch?” “No catch,” I said, “and you’ll be raising money for a good cause.”

A few weeks later, one of the friends I had brought

along to the beer night was leading chants over a megaphone at a political rally.

However, after a few more weeks of spending time with my “activist friends,” she and another friend told me they didn’t want to go to an upcoming gathering with the other activists.

“We feel like they’re always judging us and like we’ll never be good enough,” they said.

There wasn’t enough cheap beer in the world – or at least not in Saskatoon – to help my friends feel like they belonged among the “granolier than thou” crowd, and I felt caught in the middle.

This story is just one example of how people who actually agree with us on issues and relate to our values are often turned off by the ways that we behave as activists. Changing this is critical if we hope to have more hands on deck to work on the issues we care about.





It's important to seek common ground when we can. If I know that someone agrees with me on an issue, and is kind and likable, I'm much more likely to seriously consider their view on a subject where we disagree, and they are likely to do the same.

In the 15 years since my failed attempt to bridge the gap between my dorm-mates and my activist friends, I haven't developed a fail-safe approach to meeting people where they're at, but I have a few principles that I try to practice.

### **Listen and relate.**

When we fail to listen, we meet people where we assume they are at, which can do a lot more harm than good.

For instance, a couple of years ago a friend of mine was livid after a conference we had attended together, because as one of the younger people in the room people had often looked directly at him when explaining a basic concept or spelling out an acronym.

He may have been young but he was already familiar with the terms they were using.

Despite the good intentions of the speakers, singling him out for more explanation without having asked him anything about his background made him feel less welcome, not more.

Taking time to listen and get to know people also allows us to relate the issues that matter to us to the things they care about in the world (and we ought to be humble and open to learning from the other people's experiences too).

### **Be inviting.**

Sometimes when I am scrolling through my Facebook friends list to invite people to political events, I notice myself not inviting some people because I've never seen them at an event before or because I don't think they're interested.

In some cases, the person has told me they aren't interested, but in the vast majority of cases, I am just assuming they aren't because I don't know and have literally never asked them to be involved in anything.

And yet I often wonder out loud why more people don't get involved!

Reaching out to people in person or over the phone goes a long way toward making people

want to be active. Better yet, ask people to play a specific role in your organizing that is suited to their interests or skills. Even a personalized email with a specific "ask" will go a lot further than a mass email or Facebook invite.

Similarly, I don't know how many events I've been to (or organized) where at no point in the event is anything said about how people can continue to be involved or what the next step is in a strategy.

Whenever possible, building in specific asks, both of the whole group, and of individuals directly, should be a key part of an event-organizing checklist if we want our movements to grow.

### **Be affirming and encouraging.**

Jenn Bergen is a community organizer currently pursuing her PhD in education with a focus on youth civic engagement.

When I asked her about tips for meeting people where they're at, she said, "Always remember that at some point in your life you didn't know what you know now and at some point people were meeting you where you were at. No one has gotten to where they are without having been a recipient of that kind of relationship."

Kindly and gently supporting people as they learn, and making space for their mistakes is important. People did (and probably still do) the same for us whether we realize it or not.

Furthermore, when new people get involved in something we are organizing, noticing their contributions is extremely important. Often, what seems like a small contribution by someone new to our group has actually taken a lot of effort and has required the person to step outside their comfort zone. Feeling appreciated and valued is key to making someone want to continue to be involved in our organizing.

### **Seek common ground.**

Recently, I went to see a children's play with a friend who is ten years old. When a perform-

er asked the kids what they would do if they were royalty for a day, my friend's hand shot up and she responded, to the uncomfortable laughter of the adults in the audience, "I would make it so that all of the power in the world came from nuclear power plants."

I cringed inside and took a deep breath. After the show, we talked about her moment in the spotlight and why people had laughed. I admitted that we didn't actually agree on the subject of nuclear power, and that not everyone saw nuclear power as a safe, clean technology. I thought she was old enough to know that not everyone agrees with her.

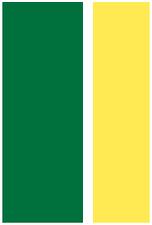
However, knowing that she is a girl in a world that discourages women from being smart and assertive, I also chose to look for what I did agree with in what she said. I told her that it was perfectly fine to disagree with people you like, and that I thought it was cool how much she seemed to know about energy issues and that she was very smart.

I was affirming, and I also didn't want to use age as a power play. I may have great analysis and be able to win an argument with a ten-year-old, but empowering her as a young woman was more important to me than winning the argument.

As activists, we often agree about 99 per cent of things but spend much more than 1 per cent of our energy fighting about where we disagree, frequently in ways that are damaging to our movements.

It's important to seek common ground when we can. If I know that someone agrees with me on an issue, and is kind and likable, I'm much more likely to seriously consider their view on a subject where we disagree, and they are likely to do the same.

Finding common ground isn't just a good idea because I might be able to win someone over on other issues; it's also a good idea because the common ground we find may lead to entirely new possibilities and ideas.



## ALL THE TWITS YOU'LL EVER NEED

If you want your union's handle, or your handle, added to this list simply tweet as such to @SKFedLabour.

@ActivistKent

@Bymoan

@CLCSask

@COPE397

@CUPEsask

@DeniseLDick

@JudyHenley1

@KLQbn

@LHubich

@LJohb

@OwnYourSask

@PrezCape

@PurpleWorksSEIU

@SaskSpark

@SGEU

@SGEUMary

@Shobna Radons

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