

Official magazine of LiUNA! Local 1611

# THE LABOURER

Spring — 2023

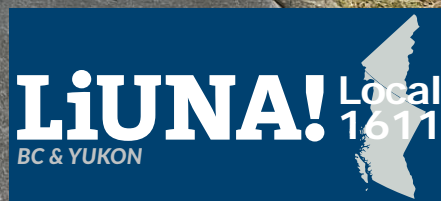
## Grounds for Grieving

Members beautify Forest Lawn



LiUNA partners with, Canucks, Lions

Accomplishments and Goals





# Membership milestone: 10,000 and counting

Balloons didn't drop from the ceiling.

There were no airhorns or other noisemakers.

No one applauded enthusiastically.

But some time in the fall, LiUNA Local 1611 quietly signed up our 10,000th member.

"We were not surprised when it happened, but at the same time we had no chance to stop and think about what that meant, simply because everyone has just been so busy with all the other things that come with having a vast, diverse and engaged membership," said Nav Malhotra, Business Manager/Secretary Treasurer.

It was a huge milestone. With a growth rate of 26 per cent in just the last two years, Local 1611 is now the biggest LiUNA local in the Northwest Region, the second biggest in Canada and one of the Top 10 largest locals in North America.

While overall union membership across North America is on the rise as workers look to better their lives, Local 1611's growth is unprecedented. Malhotra attributes the explosion in membership to the hard work and commitment of our

organizers, recruiters, service representatives and other staff, as well as to workers choosing Local 1611 for superior wages, benefits, training and member representation.

But there is also pride in a union, says Malhotra, and he believes that's a factor, too. Local 1611 has a reputation for supporting community initiatives and programs through direct donations and sponsorships.

"Our members tell us that these organizations are important to them in their communities, and whether it's a local food bank, free counselling services or programs for people with disabilities – we are privileged to be able to provide support," said Malhotra.

In December, Local 1611 donated more than \$230,000 to almost 75 non-profits.

"That is the vital role our union and the labour movement plays in the economic security and prosperity of everyone."

At more than 10,000 members in construction, health care, service, rail, security, parking enforcement and mining, to name a few sectors, Local 1611 remains a powerful force for good.

## LiUNA partners with Canucks and BC Lions

LiUNA Local 1611 is scoring goals and touchdowns with our latest recruitment strategies!

We've partnered with the Vancouver Canucks and the BC Lions to raise awareness of the benefits of belonging to our union and working in construction.

"The industry is experiencing a crushing shortage of workers all across Canada," said Nav Malhotra, Local 1611's Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer. "Traditional recruitment strategies are just not good enough anymore and so we decided to do something different – something big."

According to the latest data from Statistics Canada, industry growth is far outpacing growth in the workforce. Meanwhile, 22 per cent of the construction labour force is expected to retire in the next decade.

"We advertise, we attend career fairs, we sponsor events, we do high school outreach, and we work hard to connect with underrepresented groups, and while those initiatives have moved the needle, we needed to do more," explains Malhotra.

Through a partnership with the Vancouver Canucks, Local 1611 is featured on the rinkboard, scoreclock halo and on the concourse at Rogers Arena during Vancouver Canucks home games. In addition, viewers watching at home will see Local 1611 on digitally enhanced dasherboards (DED) at various times during all home and away games. DED is a brand new concept for the National Hockey League, allowing camera-visible arena advertising to be digitally replaced by dynamic branding.

For football fans, we're also a new presenting

sponsor of the BC Lions Orange Shirt Day game and Indigenous Youth Development programs. Local 1611's logo will appear on 10,000 Orange Shirts given away at the game and our union will be recognized in various ways during CFL football season, from Terry Fox Plaza in Vancouver to game field and LED boards.

Importantly, Local 1611's sponsorship will also support the Lions' four-week Indigenous Youth Development program, which aims to build and invest in Indigenous youth through support. The program includes flag football practices and educational workshops culminating in an eight-game tourney and barbecue at the Lions' training facility in Surrey.

"We are committed to enhancing training and work opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and we know that these programs help to reduce barriers to employment by equipping participants with additional life skills developed through sport," said Malhotra.

The Lions partnership builds on Local 1611's commitment to meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples. Our training school is already the No. 1 sponsor of Indigenous apprentices in our size category in the Building Trades, and we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the BC Métis Federation last year to prioritize training and jobs for Métis Peoples.

Local 1611 is the only labour union to enter partnership agreements with the Vancouver Canucks and BC Lions. Across the border, Seattle-based LiUNA Local 242 sponsors the Seattle Kraken NHL team.





**Corry Anderson-Fennell**  
Director of Communications/Political Liaison

**LiUNA! Local 1611**  
BC & YUKON

## Editor's Message

When I joined LiUNA Local 1611 last July, I had a pretty good idea of what unions are all about, and the positive differences they make in the lives of working people. I grew up in a labour household and spent a fair share of my childhood bringing donuts to one picket line or another. But Local 1611 takes the responsibility all unions share in making life better to an entirely new level – the next level, really.

In December, we donated more than \$230,000 to local charities and non-profit programs. We bargained new, astonishing collective agreements for our members. We connected our members who needed it with appropriate counselling and assistance programs. We helped our members put their families through school. We lobbied on behalf of our members in Victoria and Ottawa. And we won settlements for our injured members so they could heal with dignity.

That's the tip of the iceberg.

The Labourer is a place to share these stories, and I do hope you read them and take pride in knowing that none of this good work would be possible without you.

## Thousands in scholarships up for grabs by members

Hey, members! You've got a big reason to smile because it's Scholarship Season! The LiUNA Northwest Regional Office is proud to offer the following 2023 scholarships to members and their families through the W. Vernie Reed Memorial Fund:

- ♦ One \$8,000 scholarship to the Pamela Reed winner
- ♦ Twenty-two (22) \$4,000 Local Union scholarships
- ♦ Six (6) \$4,000 scholarships for the District Councils and Western Canada Subregional Office
- ♦ Up to ten (10) \$3,000 At-Large Scholarships

Scholarships are available to members and their dependents, including grandchildren.

For more information and to apply: [nwliuna.org/scholarship](http://nwliuna.org/scholarship)

## Additional scholarships

The 2023 Local 1611 scholarship applications are also available as of April 1. Pass this fantastic union benefit around the coffee room – we want to top last year's number of applicants and help even more members and their families with their education costs. Visit [liuna1611.org/scholarships](http://liuna1611.org/scholarships) for details.

## #WeAreTheLabourers

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## #FeelThePower



# Honour those who have died by fighting for the living

By Nav Malhotra | Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer

Workplace injuries cost 30 construction workers their lives in 2021. That's one worker every 12 days. As we do every year on the National Day of Mourning April 28, we will stand in silence this month to remember these construction workers, and all the other workers who went to work and didn't come home. We do this a lot.

In January, we joined the BC Building Trades, affiliated construction unions and local government representatives at the annual Bentall Memorial in Vancouver to commemorate the lives of four carpenters who plunged to their deaths from the 36th floor of Bentall IV in 1981.

And three months earlier, in September, we attended the official dedication of the Asbestos Memorial on the waterfront at the Vancouver Convention Centre. The memorial is to the thousands of workers who have died and continue to die from asbestos exposure. They say dying from asbestos exposure is like slowly drowning to death.

Never far from our thoughts at these events are the 26 members of our own union who were horrifically killed in the 1965 Granduc Mine slide. We have two monuments at our head office; one honours these miners and the other pays

tribute to all the members who have died in various other workplace tragedies as far back as 1972.

It would be a hallmark of progress if we never attended another memorial to fallen workers and never added any more names to a monument of workplace tragedy. But that requires a break from reality. Instead, we commit to doing everything we can to ensure workers go home to their families at the end of the day. This includes lobbying for regulatory changes that make workplaces safer.

As members of the BC Federation of Labour, the BC Building Trades, local labour councils and a network of LiUNA union locals across North America whose members number in the many hundreds of thousands, we have the power. Can you feel it?

Though union solidarity is one of our greatest strengths, we sometimes forget its stunning power.

Thanks to the power of solidarity, the province enacted life-saving changes to the Workers Compensation Act last year. Now, contractors performing asbestos abatement must be licensed to operate in B.C., and the workers and employers who perform asbestos abatement must complete mandatory safety training and certification.

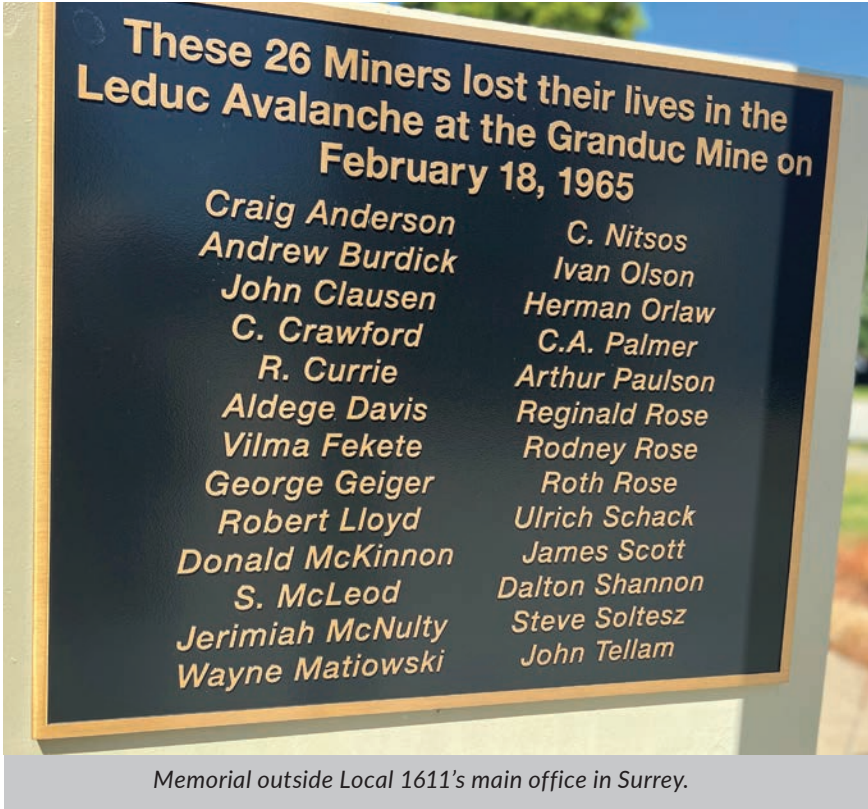
The many public awareness campaigns undertaken by Labour around a worker's right to refuse unsafe work have also, finally, led to modernization of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Now, employers must inform workers assigned a certain task whether other workers have refused that task out of concern for their own safety. Previously, the employer could merely reassign a task deemed unsafe by one worker to another worker, without ever telling the second worker the task had been refused for safety reasons.

And most recently, the BC NDP government enacted changes to the Employment Standards Act requiring workers to be at least 16 years old to work in construction, and at least 18 years old to do certain higher risk jobs like oil and gas drilling, confined space, and any job that requires a respirator.

Prior to these amendments, which were introduced in phases after significant consultation, children as young as 12 could work in our industry. This was facilitated by the former BC Liberal government, which reduced the minimum age from 15 to 12 and allowed employers to pay an insulting "training wage" that was \$2 an hour below the minimum wage at the time.

So while we will always mourn the dead, let us never cease to feel and use our power to fight for the living.

**"It would be a hallmark of progress if we never attended another memorial to fallen workers."**



Memorial outside Local 1611's main office in Surrey.





# Union service in an era of self-service

## In memoriam: For two fallen Brothers

By Mark Olsen | President

In the Local 1611 Christmas magazine, I wrote an article about the importance of the three words that have encircled the LIUNA logo for 120 years, namely JUSTICE, HONOUR and STRENGTH.

Two members have passed away since that article was written, who both epitomized those words in practice. As such, we now want to honour **Leroy Vollans** and **Brian Cox**, two longtime members of LIUNA in B.C.

### Leroy Vollans



It was some time in the year 2000 that I remember meeting Leroy in Vernon, B.C. at a meeting of **Wescon** employees, where Leroy worked. Wescon was a precast concrete plant in Armstrong that was certified with the Union for decades. We were preparing for another round of bargaining with Wescon and we knew it would be very contentious.

Bargaining, as anticipated, did not go well, and we knew we would be locked out, so we took pre-emptive strike action starting July 25, 2001.

Leroy was one of 40-plus members who shut down the plant and began to picket. The strike ended up lasting for over five years, one of the longest in B.C. history and did not end until the anti-union Labour Board (under the B.C. Liberal government of the day) declared it over.

The plant has been mothballed for years now, it never resumed as a union operation. Local 1611 ran a 24-hour, seven-day-per-week picket line and Leroy very quickly became our Lead Picket Captain and key contact for me as their Union representative.

In fact, Leroy was on the line almost every day of the five-year strike. He was committed to his fellow members and the Union, and believed that a reasonable Collective Agreement was worth fighting for.

Leroy had many tough issues to manage, from trucks running the line, scabs, harassment and threats, legal proceedings at the Labour Board and in court and even a drive-by shooting when a bullet hit the picket shack (to read the whole story, see our Local 1611 history book, *Building the Power*, on our website).

All the while Leroy held the line, he held his cool, a quiet but effective leader.

After the strike was over, we needed something good to come out of a bad situation, so Local 1611 hired Leroy as a full-time Service Representative in 2007. For the next dozen or so years until his retirement, Leroy was the Union's representative in the Okanagan, Interior and later added the Kootenays.

Leroy was a quiet, composed and professional representative who did very good work in a very difficult job. Leroy was also a trustee on the Union's Medical and Pension

Plan for a period of time.

Throughout his 41 years of membership and his varied roles, Leroy truly believed in the Union and the membership.

In fact, Leroy's wife Kim said that when the ambulance arrived at their home to take him to the hospital, he refused to go until he put on a Local 1611 shirt. That's Leroy, it was an honour and a privilege to have known him.

### Brian Cox



Brian was a true Tunnel and Rock worker as a proud member of Local 168, which later became part of the merger to form Local 1611 in 1997. Brian would have achieved 50 years of continuous

membership next year.

As a driller, blaster and underground miner, Brian, who lived in the Kootenays, became an integral member on the tools and in the lunchroom, boardroom and meeting room, advocating for the rights of the membership.

Brian was a passionate and professional leader who always put the members first. Brian assumed many critical roles in and for the Union, from being the head Job Steward on many jobsites, including the Celgar Pulp Mill Project; he helped organize **Paramount Drilling and Blasting**; and worked for many contractors including **Columbia Hydro Constructors**, **Emil Anderson Construction**, **West Kootenay Mechanical**, **Clayburn** and **Dillingham**, to name a few. He was not only a key area member and often a Job Steward, he also worked as a foreman and general foreman. And in his latter years, he even worked for the Union part-time on holiday relief as a Service Representative in the Kootenays.

Brian was a true trade unionist and his work ethic was unmatched. He also attended every Union information meeting he could and attended all the Retiree Club events in his area.

Brian was a very special member and person who always had the interests of the members foremost in his mind. He leaves behind his wife Rose, who was also a member of Local 1611.

I was very honoured and privileged to have known and worked with Leroy and Brian when they were Picket Captains or Job Stewards and then Representatives of the Union. They were different from each other, but both very effective in their own way. And they both shared a common goal, what they wished for themselves, they wished for all.

On behalf of Nav Malhotra, the Executive Board and the entire membership, I pass on our deepest condolences to Kim Vollans and Rose Cox.

We all miss Leroy and Brian very much.

Rest in Peace, Brothers.

# 2021/22 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## MEMBERSHIP

- Reached membership milestone of 10,000+ through recruitment and organizing
- Became largest LiUNA local in Western Canada
- Improved medical and pension benefits (+14% since 2019)
- Awarded Contractor of the Year and Member of the Year
- Established Labourers CARE and Youth Advisory committees
- Held 85/25 celebrations throughout BC
- Developed virtual meeting alternatives for general membership meetings, training courses
- Delivered various training to almost 6,000 members
- Secured more than \$1 Billion in additional construction work through expansion of Community Benefits Agreement
- Successfully lobbied for improvements to BC Labour Code and Employment Standards Act
- Kept connected with retired members throughout COVID

## FINANCE

- Accrued \$8.1 million surplus
- Invested in strategic partnerships to expand recruitment
- Increased by 7% monthly pension for retirees, and credits for active members
- Created in-person & online shop steward courses

## COMMUNITY

- Expanded community and charity engagement throughout BC, driven by membership desire
- Directly donated more than \$500,000 over two years to community-driven non-profit organizations and programs
- Provided direct assistance to Ukrainians fleeing war & Maritime victims of Hurricane Fiona
- Acquired a mobile organizing/recruitment vehicle

## INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

- Signed MOU with BC Metis Federation to prioritize jobs and training
- Incorporated Indigenous flag & developed Indigenous commemorative emblem
- Waived initiation fee for Indigenous workers
- Invested in key programs supporting Indigenous Peoples
- Became No. 1 sponsor of Indigenous apprentices in the Building Trades for our size
- Included Indigenous acknowledgment of unceded territory on all communications & correspondence, and at start of meetings





# 2023 GOALS

- Develop five-year Strategic Plan
- Reach 11,000 members
- Organize 17 new companies, including contractors working on green energy projects and at least one Indigenous-owned business
- Expand market share in precast, civil and roadbuilding sectors
- Initiate youth committee and continue to support Empower Youth program
- Support youth programs and initiatives, increase youth engagement
- Develop partnerships with sporting teams to increase reach, engagement and recruitment
- Expand scholarship program for members and their families
- Offer scholarships specifically for underrepresented groups such as Indigenous and women members
- Expand donations to member-supported community non-profits
- Resume Retiree Club events provincewide and continue Generation U publication
- Provide various training to staff, including cultural competency, occupational first aid and mental health
- Provide educational opportunities for membership
- Increase presence at trade shows and high school/industry career fairs
- Develop Local 1611 app
- Support the BC NDP with the goal of keeping them in power through the next election
- Lobby for changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker program, and cessation of the International Mobility Program in construction
- Lobby for expansion of public infrastructure projects under the Community Benefits Agreement framework

POWER

OPPORTUNITY

STRENGTH

LIVE BETTER. JOIN LIUNA

LEADERSHIP



- Lobby for expansion of public infrastructure projects under the Community Benefits Agreement framework
- Lobby for stronger Labour Laws, Employment Standards and WorkSafeBC regulations to protect workers
- Support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through increased Indigenous engagement and meaningful programming
- Reduce barriers to employment for Indigenous People, support and enhance Indigenous training and work opportunities
- Increase funding to Training PLUS
- Seek additional training funds from the provincial and federal governments
- Build new courses, including Green Hat Orientation, rakerman, drug and alcohol awareness, H2S awareness, confined space entry rescue, chainsaw safety, utility locating, foreperson, rock and underground-related, Naloxone.
- Procure new space to allow for the expansion of Training PLUS







# Feel the power and feel the pride

By Mike Berg | Service Representative

We have a slogan here at LiUNA: Feel the Power. When I joined Local 1611 back in 1997 and started my career in construction, I thought it was a reference to the work we do. We move earth, we tunnel underground, we pave the way, literally, for big infrastructure projects in every corner of this province.

But it also means something else, and that is the collective power of a union to fight for its own members, and also for the betterment of the communities where we all live, work, learn and play.

LiUNA does this in hundreds of ways. In December, Local 1611 donated more than \$230,000 to charities and non-profit organizations, most of which were chosen by our members because of a positive impact they had in their lives. Two initiatives we supported that are close to my heart are the Surrey School District's BASES program and the Gateway Home Health Team.

## BASES

BASES, which is an acronym for Building Academic, Social and Employment Skills, works with students with complex needs reach their potential by providing academic and social skills programming. For these amazing students, every day is about overcoming challenges, and they're doing it! I know many of them personally, and it warms me to the soul to observe their every success in the BASES program.



## Gateway Home Health Team

The nurses, social workers and home support workers who comprise the Gateway Home Health Team assist at-risk adults living in poverty, self-neglect, caregiver neglect and sometimes abuse. The team helps them access food, shelter, heat, fans in hot weather and transportation. These adults struggle with severe mental health issues, intellectual disabilities or dementia, and they rely almost entirely on formal community support systems and government resources. And as you can imagine, that is never enough, so sometimes the team personally fundraises for them or pays for necessities themselves from their own pocket. LiUNA's support helped ease this burden and assist some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Our union cannot do this good work without you, our members. And for that, we thank you.

## A fond farewell

There is power in our union, but as a Service Representative, there is also privilege in representing our members, alongside amazing Shop Stewards like Jelmer Van Elk. Jelmer is retiring from his position as a lot manager at

Impark. He has been a huge asset to our union and to our bargaining team, and he will be missed. Rather than speak for Jelmer, I share an excerpt from his memoir:

*This is what I always strove to do: to get a fair outcome for the employee, who, without the Union, is always in danger of getting the bad end of the stick, so to speak.*

*I worked for 25 years as a Shop Steward and have an accordion file brim full of notes of meetings. It was a long, strange trip, as Jerry Garcia would be inclined to say.*

Congratulations on your retirement, Jelmer.



Jelmer Van Elk and his wife Louisa, who also works at Impark.

# Job Steward training up and running



By Nathan Ferguson | Recruitment Officer/Service Representative

Local 1611 ran its first two instructor-led Job Steward courses, with the most recent being the Feb.5 construction sector class.

By all accounts, both courses were a smashing success. A big thank-you to all of the Stewards who took the time out of their Sundays to attend these classes. Your dedication to your Union brothers and sisters is commendable, and Local 1611 will continue to support you in and out of the workplace.

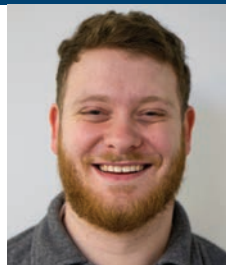
We have another instructor-led Job Steward course for the service sector coming up on June 4. Please scan the QR code next to this article to register. Registration will close once the class fills up.

I look forward to seeing the rest of our Stewards in class!



Job Steward Sign Up





# You are the power

Sarina Hanschke | *Lead Organizer* - Oscar Sanchez, Ben Ger and Keith Murdoch | *Organizers*

Talking with people, learning about their goals and struggles, bridging relationships, building trust, and developing leaders by providing tools and support is what has, and will, advance and grow the union.

Helping others build power in their workplace to enjoy the same benefits and protections brings tremendous joy to our organizing team and builds on the continued strength of LiUNA.

A considerable amount of the work of organizing is about building robust networks based on trust. Our power to help people shift their view of themselves relative to their work and their community comes from the authentic relationships we foster with people. Real relationships also allow us as organizers to best identify leaders, which helps win, propel and

sustain our union for the future.

One of the biggest challenges we encounter is people thinking that what we offer is too good to be true; that's where YOU come in. We'll be reaching out to YOU, our members, this year to connect with current and past coworkers, because the real relationships you've built over your career is a tremendous power to growing your union and enhancing the standard of living.

We have a fantastic opportunity to help grow the union under the worker-friendly NDP government. Please consider small ways you can use your power and help connect us with those we can welcome into the union.

As LiUNA General President Terry O Sullivan says: "May you feel the power, may you be the power, and may you use the power."



## Agreements ratified for some care centres

By Shelley Moore | *Service Representative*

LiUNA Local 1611 members in the health care sector have been involved in contract negotiations for new collective agreements for the term 2022-2025.

Agreements for James Bay Care Centre and Sandringham Care Centre have been successfully ratified. These members work at long-term care facilities and their wages are once again tied to the facilities' collective agreement rate. Twenty years ago, the B.C. Liberal government ripped up collective agreements for long-term care workers, and thanks to the NDP's commitment to health care, we have achieved parity once again. This is important as it ensures that all workers at seniors' care facilities have wage equality across the province.

The B.C. Ministry of Health also ended the order restricting workers to a single seniors' care site as of Jan. 1, 2023. The end of the order allows our members to once again work at more than one site.

### IN BRIEF

#### AXIS and HOMES

The NDP's 10-year mandate to bring similar comparability to Community Social Services workers will be achievable with the latest instalment of a \$22,366,929 low-wage redress payment. The collective agreement will see this sector's wages levelled up to the facility wage rates. This table was the farthest away from the levelled wage mandate and with the extra low wage redress payments, comparability will be achieved.

AXIS and HOMES ballots are currently being sent out for ratification. The results of the vote will be announced in April (after press time).

#### Pension plan AGM

The Municipal Pension Plan AGM was Oct. 13 for members at Axis Family Resources, Homes Society, James Bay Care Centre and Sandringham Care Centre.

The good news is that your pension plan is in good standing! There are 227,493 active members, 72 per cent of whom are women. The plan has 118,048 retired members and 959 employers.

For more information, visit [mpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://mpp.pensionsbc.ca)

#### Cascades Recovery

Our members at the plant have had a challenging winter with snow and cold weather issues as well as difficult negotiations.

On a positive note, we have ratified the collective agreement and spring is on the way.

Thank you to the membership at Cascades. You always make me so welcome at your plant.

Take care, everyone, and thank you for being such fantastic Local 1611 members.



Janelyn and Ailin, health care aides at James Bay Care Centre.



# A PAINFUL WAIT

## Security worker David Smith is raising awareness about organ donation while he waits for a kidney

By Nathan Ferguson | Recruitment Officer/Service Representative

In the fall of 2019, David Smith had it all.

He had been hired by GardaWorld Security Services to protect a decommissioned pulp mill in Port Alice on Vancouver Island. He was working 12-hour shifts, two weeks on and two weeks off.

He had a job he loved, money in the bank, and his good friend was his boss.

But one cold, dark morning while he was driving to work with a co-worker, Smith drove his car off the road and into the side of a mountain. The vehicle rolled three or four times, and although his co-worker got out, Smith remained stuck, upside down in a ditch, for 45 minutes before help arrived.

The crash occurred outside of cellular range, so the pair not only had to flag down another motorist, but that motorist had to drive another 20 minutes down the road to get a signal and call for help.

"I had a broken back, cracked ribs – I was pretty messed up," recalled Smith, 53.

Smith was facing six months of intense rehab for his injuries

and was largely unable to work. He was fortunate, however, to have the support of his regional supervisor at Garda, Jared Beech. When Smith was ready to be released from North Island Hospital in Campbell River, Beech made the 12-hour return trip to bring him home to Victoria. Beech continued to provide support, getting Smith settled into his apartment and making sure he had groceries.

"I can't even tell you what I owe him," says Smith. "He's taken me on with his whole heart. He's made me feel like I'm important and he's always kept me connected Garda."

Everyone believed that Smith would eventually be well enough to return to Garda. However, six months into his rehabilitation, he started to experience symptoms that weren't associated with his car accident: chronic fatigue, nausea and swollen extremities.

Then Smith got the devastating diagnosis that he had kidney failure and was facing a lifetime of dialysis or a kidney transplant.

"I worked full time for that first year-and-a-half while having dialysis three to four times a week for 3.5 to four hours each time."

Smith was stationed at a frontline COVID testing site. He eventually contracted COVID and spent two weeks in the ICU at Royal Jubilee Hospital, including four days on a ventilator.

Today, Smith is no longer able to work full time and he's on a transplant list with almost 600 other people in B.C. Doctors have told him he'll be waiting five to seven years for a transplant and in the meantime dialysis is his only option for life. Smith reached out to Local 1611, which provided some support, and Beech continues to keep tabs on Smith and provide him shifts when possible.

Smith has two adult children and three grandchildren in Eastern Canada, including a newborn he hasn't met yet due to his inability to travel.

He wants to raise awareness about the importance of registering as an organ donor (it takes five minutes) or becoming a living donor. Smith has a champion in Sussanne Skidmore, president of the BC Federation of Labour. Skidmore gave a kidney to her cousin Stacey in December 2013.

She remembers when Stacey walked into her hospital room the day after the surgery to thank her.

"The look on his face was magic – I can't explain it," says the labour leader. "To have that moment, to be able to see that look on someone's face, to know that you've given them something that they needed more than anything in the world is huge."

Smith knows he needs a transplant to have even a simple future.

"I just want to live. I want to smell the air and hear the birds."

Visit [transplant.bc.ca/](https://transplant.bc.ca/) to register as an organ donor and learn more about living donation.





# Family-owned Bay Hill named Contractor of the Year

By Tatiana Tomljanovic

A few years ago at a Christmas party, Gord Myren, civil manager at **Bay Hill Contracting Ltd.** said, “we want Bay Hill to be the best company to work for.”

Gord Myren is the son of Wilf Myren, one of the founding members of the family-owned and operated company that employs up to three generations associated with the original partners (Bob Burns, Joe DePedrina and Gary Cohen) as well as many other multigenerational families.

“We’re a family business,” said Gord Myren. “We treat people as people.”

Awarded the 2022 Contractor of the Year by LiUNA Local 1611, Bay Hill specializes in civil, electrical and high voltage electrical builds. The company has a high employee retention rate, and prioritizes safety and ongoing education by proactively and routinely making Training PLUS workshops available to their workers.

“They’re just a dream to work with on multiple levels,” said Tom Miller, Training Plan Administrator for 1611. “We’ve done a bunch of courses for them. When they’re slow, say in the winter, rather than keeping people home and not paying them, they bring them in and pay them to be here and get trained.”

Miller nominated Bay Hill for Contractor of the Year citing the company as well-organized, forward thinking, and generous with their time and facilities.

“If we don’t have space, they provide it. Gord rigged up their mezzanine with audio and visual equipment for a workshop,” said Miller. “I needed land to provide pipelaying courses and he put me in contact with the Langley Rugby Club to replace some drainage for the rugby field. I think they have an awesome

culture.”

In addition to keeping their workers’ necessary training current, Myren works with Miller to provide additional educational workshops that include blueprint reading, survey courses and even naloxone training.

“Naloxone training isn’t essential to their core civil work, but they see it as a priority because the opioid epidemic affects construction workers so greatly and they want to keep their employees safe,” said Miller.

According to government and public health studies, 70 per cent of illicit drug overdose deaths in the Fraser Health region were people who worked in the trades industry. “There have been some people who work for us who have been affected by family members passing away due to drug overdoses. For some, it really hits close to home,” said Myren. “We have a commitment to our goal of being the best company to work for and that means looking after our workers.”

The Contractor of the Year award includes a cheque for \$2,500, which Bay Hill plans to use towards supporting their employees’ mental health.



Gord Myren (holding certificate) with 1611's Tom Miller (right) and Mike Berg (left).

## Local 1611's Member of the Year goes above and beyond



Member of the Year Travis Rodrigues (second from right) with Service Rep Steve Hecocks (left), Twin Rivers Elementary principal Wendy Cutler (right) and PAC chairperson Catherine Cody.

Steve Hecocks has high praise for Local 1611's 2022 Member of the Year, Travis Rodrigues.

“He’s the epitome of what a foreman should be,” says Hecocks, Local 1611's Service Representative in the Interior and Kootenay regions. “He’s always helping all new members any way he can. He’s the type of person I would want as my direct supervisor.”

A general foreman with CIMS, Rodrigues is known for going above and beyond as both a foreman and a union member. He relishes a challenge and isn't afraid of hard work. He also prioritizes a safe workplace and lets his crew know there are no dumb questions — just unasked ones.

A 10-year member of LiUNA, Rodrigues says he had several great mentors over his career, and he tries to pay it forward by mentoring the younger members he works with now. He also reminds members of the benefits of working in a union.

“I’ve worked on non-union jobs, and they just turn you over and kick you out the door,” said Rodrigues of past non-union work. “To have the security and protection of your union is such a good feeling. Unions are the reason we have holidays and benefits. And you get to go home safe and healthy every day.”

As Member of the Year, Rodrigues received a cheque for \$1,000 for himself, and \$2,500 for his charity of choice: the Twin Rivers Elementary Parent Advisory Council in Castlegar. The PAC ensures all students are treated equitably with the same access to programs, resources and opportunities. That means sometimes subsidizing program fees and other so-called “extras”. Rodrigues hopes the funds will help the school provide hot lunches for students and contribute to an outdoor shelter on the grounds.



## Trouble reaching WCB? Here's the secret to success

By Tony Parkinson | *Workers' Advocate*

While you are on a workers' compensation claim, keeping in regular contact with WCB (WorksafeBC) is extremely important. This can be for a variety of reasons, including updating your claim status, providing medical information, or requesting additional benefits. Unfortunately, it can often be exceedingly difficult to contact someone at WCB who is involved with your claim. We hear from members all the time that they have not been able to reach their case manager, vocational rehabilitation consultant, or another WCB employee. This can make the claim process much more frustrating and may result in it taking longer for you to get benefits, services, or medical treatment.

If you are having a problem reaching someone at WCB, this is what we suggest:

- Do not use the person's direct line. This goes to their voicemail and there is no way to track if you left a message, when you called, or how many times you called.
- Call the WCB call centre instead, at 604-231-8888. Ask to speak to the person you are looking for, and if they are not available, ask to leave a call back request on the claim file. This will remain on the claim file forever and will keep a record of every time you call.
- If the person does not call you back after two business

days, call again and repeat the same process. Then wait another two business days.

- If they still have not called you back, call the call centre and ask to speak to the Client Services Manager (CSM) on your claim. This is the manager of everyone involved with your claim and they can "light a fire" under the person you are trying to reach to get back to you. The CSM generally won't make decisions on your claim directly, but they can ensure that it is being looked after properly.
- If the CSM does not call you back after two business days, call again and repeat the same process. Then wait another two business days.
- It is important that you follow these steps. That way the CSM knows you have already followed the proper procedure when they get your call back request.

If you have followed these steps and still have not heard from anyone at WCB, please contact us at Labourers' Membership Services right away. We can discuss other options and provide advice about how you should proceed.

If you have any other questions about your WCB, EI or CPP claim, feel free to contact us at 604-538-6992, toll-free 1-888-788-2888, or email [info@lms1611.org](mailto:info@lms1611.org).



## Retiree events are back on!

By Bruce Ferguson | *Retiree Club President*

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to report to you.

The past three years have been a difficult time for everyone as we all know due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Fortunately, it is no longer as prevalent in our lives, and so this year we have planned a full agenda of events around our Local 1611 area.

We will once again hold events in Nelson, Kelowna,



Victoria, Nanaimo and a big event in Vancouver in early December 2023.

I want to thank all the dedicated and enthusiastic directors of our Retiree Council: Manuel Alvernaz, Derrick Kirk, Manuel Figuelredo, Merrick Walsh, Jack Feirrerro and Eduardo Games.

Stay safe and healthy, and I look forward to seeing you at our planned events this year.



## Win \$2,000 for your favourite charity

**Nomination deadline is April 30**

By Shelley Moore  
*Chair, Labourers' Union Charities*

LIUNA Local 1611 is proud to stand with the membership in support of their charities and events throughout the province.

This spring, Labourers' Union Charities (LUC) is offering

members a chance to win \$2,000 for their charity of choice! Entering the contest is easy – just send us an email ([luc@cswu1611.org](mailto:luc@cswu1611.org)) explaining why your chosen charity is the best candidate. Hint: It's helpful to include links to their website if they have one, and whether you've personally observed a difference they've made in someone's life.

If your charity is chosen, they'll get \$2,000 for the good work they do, and you'll get a \$100 gift card for nominating them!

Deadline for entries is April 30.