100 Years of Alberta Labour
A Century of Struggle and Solidarity

The Alberta Labour History Institute commemorates the founding of the Alberta Federation of Labour in 1912
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Thank you for supporting the Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI). To mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) in June 1912, the theme of this year’s annual labour history calendar is 100 years of Alberta labour.

Planning for the AFL’s centennial, which is being celebrated by unions and other organizations formed by the workers who built this province, began in 2007 when the AFL and ALHI joined in a partnership called Project 2012. We wanted to ensure that education about labour’s history would form a major part of centennial celebrations. Communities across Alberta have planned projects and activities to last throughout the spring and summer, beginning with a musical tour headed by well-known Alberta musician and songwriter, Maria Dunn.

A daylong Celebration of Labour will be held on June 16, 2012 at Fort Edmonton Park. Everyone is invited! The AFL has booked the old Blatchford Field hangar, the surrounding field and other venues for a full day of union displays, presentations, speeches, musical performances, theatre, kids games and a dance - all of which will be kicked-off with a banner extravaganza down the historical streets of the Fort with banners from local and national unions, labour councils and community organizations.

The Celebration of Labour will be preceded by the Alberta Labour History Institute sponsored conference on June 13 to 15 at the University of Alberta that will include presentations by labour historians, storytelling sessions by long-time leaders and activists and labour history displays.

The AFL was founded in 1912, when a group of railway workers, miners, farmers, typographers and tradespeople met in Lethbridge, Alberta to unite in the struggle for better wages, safe working conditions and political reform. Its growth is an important part of Alberta labour’s story, which Project 2012 is spreading in a number of ways including: a new labour history book, historical booklets and posters publicizing key themes in our history, short videos capturing stories of events and people, videotaped interviews with over 400 trade unionists and community leaders, a Project 2012 Website (www.project2012.ca), brochures and pamphlets publicizing the celebration, and labour history displays in art galleries, museums, libraries and with historical societies.

Join the thousands of Albertans celebrating Alberta’s labour history this year. Attend a Maria Dunn concert, visit a museum or archive to see their display, take part in your community’s 2012 event, register for the labour history conference – and certainly join the Celebration of Labour at Fort Edmonton Park on June 16.

For information or to order Project 2012 pamphlets for distribution to your members call:
Karen Werlin, Project 2012 Administrator
780-483-8999; kwerlin@telus.net
Winston Gereluk, Project 2012 Chair
780-668-8119; winstong@fastmail.fm
Jan 1, 1966 The Canadian Pension Plan went into force on this date

Jan 2, 1905 Conference of industrial unionists in Chicago leads to the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World

Jan 6, 1963 The 1,000,000th claim for compensation by an injured worker is filed with the Alberta Workmen’s Compensation Board in its 45th year of operation

Jan 12, 1973 Negotiations for a first contract at Wardair fail. A two-month strike starts

Jan 15, 1929 Martin Luther King born in Atlanta, Georgia

Jan 16, 1906 Founding meeting of the Edmonton Trades and Labour Council

Jan 17, 1915 Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) poet Ralph Chaplin writes Solidarity Forever

Jan 21, 1962 Alberta New Democrats founding provincial convention

Jan 24, 1975 Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants (CALFAA) lobbying campaign defeats proposal by Transport Canada prohibiting female flight attendants from working beyond 13th week of pregnancy

Jan 26, 1850 S. Gompers, first president of American Federation of Labor, born

Jan 27, 1954 Workers at Fort Saskatchewan’s first chemical refinery are chartered as ICWU Local 530. Now known as Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Local 530A

Jan 29, 1946 Supreme Court Justice Ivan Rand, dealing with an auto-workers dispute in Ontario, rules that unions have the legal right to collect dues from all members of a recognized bargaining unit, when the majority votes to create a union local

Our Labour has Linked

This Month In Labour History

Polish settlers working on railway, Peace River Alberta, 1928 Glenbow Archives na-3091-19
What is a labour victory? I maintain that it is a twofold thing. Workers must gain economic advantage, but they must also gain revolutionary spirit, in order to achieve a complete victory. For workers to gain a few cents more a day, a few minutes less a day, and go back to work with the same psychology, the same attitude toward society is to achieve a temporary gain and not a lasting victory.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn
Feb 2, 1989 African National Congress allowed to operate legally in South Africa after 29-year ban

Feb 4, 1965 The closing of the Standard Mine at Shaughnessy, Alberta ends the coal-mining era in southern Alberta

Feb 4, 2002 Alberta’s largest teachers’ strike begins; receives strong public support

Feb 6, 1906 Lethbridge Trades and Labour Council granted charter

Feb 6, 1974 General strike in Grenada leads to independence; US invades 10 years later

Feb 13, 1947 The gush of Leduc #1 oil well marks the beginning of a new stage of petroleum development for Alberta

Feb 14, 1949 5,000 workers begin a four-month, illegal strike in Asbestos, Québec, a strike that marked the beginnings of militancy and secularism for the “Catholic” union federation in Quebec

Feb 17, 1944 PC 1003, a federal order-in-council, provides federal government recognition of collective bargaining rights for Canadian workers

Feb 22, 2001 Calgary’s longest transit strike begins, ending 49 days later

Feb 24, 1848 Revolution begins in France, inspiring revolts across Europe

Feb 24, 1942 Canada forcibly removes all Japanese from the West Coast

Feb 24, 1965 District 1199 Health Care Workers becomes first U.S. labour union to oppose the Vietnam War

This Month In Labour History
If you come only to help me, you can go back home. But if you consider my struggle as part of your struggle for survival, then maybe we can work together.

Aboriginal saying
Our Labour has Created

March 1, 1906 Seven-month United Mine Workers strike in Lethbridge begins, resulting in anti-labour Industrial Disputes Investigation Act being passed by federal government in 1907

March 14, 1913 First convention of the Provincial Council of Carpenters

March 17, 1977 Members of CUPE begin lengthy strike at Parkland nursing home

March 18, 1911 New York Triangle Shirtwaist fire 147 workers, the vast majority women, perish after being locked in the factory by the employer

March 19, 1919 Civil Service Association of Alberta (CSA), precursor to AUPE, formed

March 20, 1980 United Nurses of Alberta organize program of action to publicize nurses' low wages

March 24, 1918 Women win vote in Canadian federal elections

March 27, 1912 IWW launches strike on Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific lines

March 30, 1927 Cesar Chavez born near Yuma, Arizona

March 31, 1949 Last major strike of Canadian Seamen's Union

1917 Calgary establishes Labour Representation League to nominate candidates in elections to all levels of government

March 1, 1978 Canadian Human Rights Act takes effect, outlawing discrimination on the grounds of age or marital status

March 13, 1919 Delegates from most union locals in western Canada meet at the Western Labour Conference in Calgary and form One Big Union

March 14, 1913 First convention of the Provincial Council of Carpenters

March 15, 1951 Local 630 of Oil Workers International Union certified in Edmonton, the first local in the oil industry to last for some time

March 18, 1918 Government of Alberta passes province's first workers compensation legislation

March 17, 1977 Members of CUPE begin lengthy strike at Parkland nursing home

March 30, 1927 Cesar Chavez born near Yuma, Arizona

Press room The Albertan newspaper, 1928 Glenbow Archives na-572-9
Every piece of progressive social legislation passed in the 20th century bears a union label.

George Meany
This Month In Labour History

April 1, 1966 The Canada Assistance Plan provides federal cost-sharing to provinces for social services
April 1, 1902 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners granted charter for Local 1055 in Calgary
April 1, 1917 Strike by 7,500 Crowsnest Pass miners belonging to the United Mine Workers of America
April 11, 1983 Bill 44 introduced: removes the legal right to strike for all hospital workers
April 12, 1919 The Edmonton Free Press, journal of the Edmonton Trades and Labour Council, begins publication
April 12, 2001 Amalgamated Transit Union Local 583 ends Calgary transit strike
April 17, 1907 Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers International Alliance Local 371 formed in Edmonton
April 17, 1982 The Constitution Act is proclaimed, along with the Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms
April 17, 1984 The Canada Health Act penalizes provinces that violate provisions of the Medical Care Act
April 18, 1980 United Nurses of Alberta begin legal strike at 79 hospitals
April 20, 1914 Ludlow, Colorado massacre of U.S. miners
April 22, 1980 Nurses defy back-to-work order, winning a negotiated settlement six days later
April 22, 1951 Civic, school board, and healthcare employees form the Federation of Public Employees, forerunner of the National Union of Public Employees
April 23, 1956 Canadian Labour Congress is formed as a merger of two competing trade union federations
April 27, 1933 Fourteen leaders of a Calgary relief strike are arrested
April 29, 1903 76 people are killed in Frank, Alberta when Turtle Mountain, weakened by mining, collapses
April 30, 1900 First Alberta local of the International Association of Machinists (IAM 357) formed in Calgary

Our Labour has Connected

Ed Tel operators, 1915, Provincial Archives of Alberta B 1482
I have been a daughter; I have been a wife; I have been a mother; I have been a grandmother; but I never was truly a woman until I became a sister when I joined the union.

Lucille Dickess, President
Clerical and Technical Workers
May 1, 1917 Civic Employees Federal Union No. 30 granted charter

May 1, 1923 Edmonton workers rally to support striking Edmonton coal miners

May 1, 1923 Edmonton workers rally to support striking Edmonton coal miners

May 4, 1886 Workers demonstrating in Chicago for the eight-hour day are attacked by police on Haymarket Square

May 5, 1818 Karl Marx born in Trier, Germany

May 5, 1903 First issue of Alberta’s labour newspaper, Bond of Brotherhood, appears in Calgary

May 7, 1968 French students and workers revolt in Paris

May 14, 1771 Labour reformer Robert Owen born in Newton, Wales

May 15, 1903 International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen grants charter to Local 1 in Edmonton

May 15, 1919 Winnipeg General Strike begins

May 18, 2007 Greyhound workers strike across western Canada

May 24, 1921 Trial of Italian-American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti begins

May 24, 1919 Drumheller coalminers begin strike, demanding recognition of the One Big Union as their bargaining agent

May 25, 1905 Calgary Trades and Labour Council granted charter

May 26, 1919 Workers in Edmonton and Calgary begin general strikes in show of solidarity with Winnipeg General Strike

May 28, 1871 Paris Commune crushed with 25,000 killed

May 28, 1919 Eight thousand miners in District 18 join sympathy strike with Winnipeg workers

Men laying asphalt Edmonton, 1937, Glenbow Archives ND–3–7666b
We have words for racism and sexism, but wealth discrimination isn’t fully recognized. It is a bias in favor of the wealthy and against labor, the environment, and the community. Concern for the public good must become the animating force of our economic order.

Marjorie Kelly
This Month In Labour History

June 1, 1986 "The Battle of 66th Street" United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 280P begin six-month strike at Gainers meat-packing plant

June 1, 1986 UFCW workers at Fletchers in Red Deer begin strike

June 6, 1902 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners granted charter for Local 1055 in Calgary

June 7, 1935 The On-to-Ottawa Trek reaches Calgary from Vancouver

June 13, 1881 Wat Tyler leads march of English peasants to London

June 14, 1872 Trade unions provided first recognition in Canadian law but severe restrictions force most of them to forego registering

June 14, 1912 First convention of newly-formed Alberta Federation of Labour begins in Lethbridge

June 19, 1914 Hillcrest mining disaster leaves 189 dead, the worst mining disaster in Alberta's history

June 19, 2002 Alberta Teachers Association reaches deal that ends dispute with the Conservative government

June 21, 1919 "Bloody Saturday" police repression of workers in Winnipeg General Strike results in two deaths

June 27, 1869 Emma Goldman, famous anarchist-feminist, born in Kovno (now Kaunas), Lithuania

June 28, 1926 Six Labour members win seats in Alberta provincial election

June 30, 1919 Government raids unions across Canada, enforcing new "sedition" legislation meant to restrict unionism and fend off socialism

"Our Labour has Repaired"
June 2012 marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL). To commemorate this important event the Alberta Labour History Institute is hosting a labour history conference June 13-15 in Edmonton. A day long Celebration of Labour organized by the AFL takes place at Fort Edmonton Park on June 16th. Plan to attend. Check www.Project2012.ca for current details.
Our Labour has *Clothed*

This Month In Labour History

July 1, 1919 A mass arrest of One Big Union members is coordinated by federal government
July 1, 1935 On to Ottawa Trek violently repressed by RCMP in Regina
July 1, 1958 Alberta proclaims its Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act
July 1, 1968 Federal Medical Care Act comes into force but Alberta does not yet participate
July 1, 1968 Canadian Union of Public Employees 474 in Edmonton is granted a charter
July 1, 1969 Alberta agrees to provide a provincial program that meets requirements of the federal Medical Care Act

July 1, 1980 AUPE “wildcat strike” at Alberta Liquor Control Board
July 6, 1949 International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers Local 720 charter issued
July 7, 1977 2,500 Alberta nurses begin legal strike at seven hospitals
July 7, 2000 After eight months of a bitter first contract fight, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Local 115A strikers lose fight for union contract at the Calgary Herald
July 8, 1918 Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union organizes two hotels and six restaurants after Calgary Labour Council threatens strike

July 8, 1953 Sheet Metal Workers Local 558 formed in Lethbridge
July 10, 1997 United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1118, meatpackers at the High River, Alberta plant go on strike
July 11, 1961 Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America Local 583 strike Calgary Transit July 11 to August 22
July 14, 1912 Woody Guthrie born in Okemah, Oklahoma
July 17, 1936 Spanish Civil War begins
July 18, 1921 United Farmers of Alberta government is elected; four Labour members are also elected

July 19, 1933 The first national convention of the CCF adopts the Regina Manifesto, pledging a socialist transformation of Canada
July 20, 1966 Canada Packers strike by United Packinghouse Workers of America
July 26, 1948 Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants Association (CAL-FAA) is certified
July 27, 1997 Canadian Auto Workers Local 4050 goes on strike against Marriott Food Services, Red Deer

Sewing machine operator GWG factory, Edmonton, 1942, Provincial Archives of Alberta B1163.1
Any executive who thinks the ultimate in busyness consists of having two important phone calls on hold and a major deadline in 20 minutes, should try facing six tables of clients simultaneously demanding that you give them their cheque, fresh coffee, a baby seat, and a warm smile... “Success” means surviving the shift.

Barbara Ehrenreich
Our Labour has *Cared for*

This Month In Labour History

August 1, 1932 The CCF is founded in Calgary by labour, farmer and socialist parties and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees.

August 1, 1906 Edmonton Trades and Labour Council granted charter.

August 1, 1918 With trade union pressure the Workmen’s Compensation Act becomes effective for the coal mining industry.

August 2, 1997 United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1118 settles strike.

August 4, 1908 Two-month national rail strike of CPR shop and yard workers begins.

August 6, 1945 U.S. drops nuclear bomb on Hiroshima.

August 6, 1981 Wardair locks out its 700 flight attendants for 13 weeks, with the company using scabs and a strikebreaking security firm.

August 7, 1940 The Unemployment Insurance Act receives royal assent. Labour had fought a long battle for a federal program of UI.


August 20, 2005 AFL declares August 20 Farmworker Day in memory of Terry Rash and in solidarity with the struggle of farmworkers to achieve dignity and respect.

August 22, 1911 Amalgamated Transit Union 569 granted charter.

August 22, 1961 Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway & Motor Coach Employees of America Local 583 Calgary Transit strike ends.

August 22, 1980 Solidarnos, founded in Poland.

August 23, 1927 Execution of Sacco and Vanzetti by state of Massachusetts.

Nurse helping patients with physiotherapy, 1955, Provincial Archives of Alberta PA.851/6
The seeds of a new labour movement lie in the assertions of workers’ rights by rank-and-file groups throughout the country. The civil rights movement, the women’s movement, the health and safety struggle, the campaigns to defend the democratic rights of union members, have all vastly expanded our notion of what the labour movement could be.

James Green
This Month In Labour History

September 1, 1905 Alberta becomes a province
September 3, 2004 First IWW World North American General Assembly in Alberta begins in Edmonton
September 4, 1920 Edmonton Free Press becomes Alberta Labour News; serves as official paper for AFL
September 6, 1946 Alberta Farmers Union begins 30-day strike demanding minimum fixed price for wheat
September 8, 1886 Alberta’s first union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, is founded in Medicine Hat
September 9, 1991 Canadian government workers stage 9-day strike
September 10, 1904 Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 488 receives first charter: largest plumbers and pipefitters local in Canada and one of the largest in North America
September 11, 1973 Democratically elected government of Salvador Allende overthrown by CIA backed Coup.
September 17, 1956 Convention begins in Edmonton leading to the merger of the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Industrial Federation of Labour of Alberta
September 17, 2003 CEP Local 1900 walk out in Edmonton in effort to ratify first contract with A-Channel
September 19, 1909 Civic Service Union 52, representing City of Edmonton inside workers is founded
September 24, 1918 IWW declared illegal in Canada
September 24, 1963 Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) is formed by a merger of National Union of Public Employees and National Union of Public Service Employees
September 25, 1918 Borden government outlaws publications and meetings in 14 languages. Canada's radical and labour press are targets
September 25, 2003 Levi Strauss announces closure of Edmonton’s GWG plant founded in 1911
September 26, 1918 Borden government bans 14 organizations, including IWW, Social Democratic Party, Chinese Labour Association and Ukrainian Social Democratic Party
September 29, 1931 RCMP murder 3 coal miners in Bienfait, Saskatchewan during peaceful strike demonstration

Our Labour has Crafted

Women working at Edmonton door and moulding factory, 1917 Glenbow Archives of Alberta NC-6-3311
In my apron I carry nails and pliers, a heavy hammer, and pride.

Maria Bachman, Tradeswoman
Our Labour has Researched

This Month In Labour History

October 1, 1920 One Big Union miners begin province-wide strike. Government passes Order-in-Council for miners to accept UMWA as their official representative.

October 4, 1918 Amalgamated Meatcutters Union formed in Edmonton.

October 6, 1958 Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 379 chartered in Calgary.

October 8, 1919 Alberta Teachers Alliance holds province’s first teachers’ strike.

October 12, 1918 Unionists in Calgary stage sympathy strike with Calgary freight handlers.

October 14, 1976 Canadian Labour Congress holds national day of protest against the Trudeau government’s wage-control policy.

October 15, 1919 Alberta Teachers Alliance strike resolved.

October 17, 1865 Delegates meet and form the National Bricklayers Union.

October 21, 1999 Founding meeting of Alberta Labour History Institute at southside Rosie’s, Edmonton.


It can readily be seen that women workers either must become organized and receive not only equal pay for equal work, but also equal opportunity for working, or they will, by degrees, naturally form an inferior class in every trading which they enter.

Ida Van Etten, 1891
November 1, 1934 Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers International Alliance Local 371 re-chartered to become Local 271, Edmonton

November 8, 1999 Members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers of Canada Local 115A and the Graphic Communications International Union Local 34M at the Calgary Herald walk off their jobs after seeking a first contract for more than a year.

November 11, 1902 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America granted charter as Local 1325 Edmonton, the oldest construction union still operating under its original charter in Alberta.

November 14, 1995 CUPE Local 8 and AUPE Local 55 (Foothills Hospital) laundry workers in Calgary engage in illegal strike to stop contracting out. Strike spreads to all major hospitals.

November 16, 1997 Maple Leaf pork plant (formerly Gainers) workers strike despite company threat to close plant if workers strike.

November 22, 2002 Edmonton Shaw Conference Centre workers UFCW Local 401 strike ends with workers winning first contract.

November 23, 1170 BC First recorded strike of workers occurs in Egypt.

November 24, 1995 CUPE Local 8 and AUPE Local 55 hospital laundry workers' illegal strike in Calgary ends with moratorium on contracting out.

November 25, 1983 Canadian postal workers reduce postal rates to 2 cents as part of negotiating tactics with Post Office.

November 27, 1992 Canadian Paperworkers Union, Communications Workers of Canada, and the Energy and Chemical Workers Union merge to create Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP).

Firefighters battle blaze at Marshall Wells store Calgary c.1950 Provincial Archives of Alberta PA 1718.1
The working classes didn’t bring this one. It was the big boys that thought the financial drunk was going to last forever and over-bought, over-merged and over-capitalized.

Will Rogers, on the Great Depression, 1931
Our Labour has Created all Wealth

This Month In Labour History

December 6, 1921 William Irvine of Calgary wins first Federal labour seat in Alberta for Canadian Labour Party

December 7, 1896 International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers is issued a charter by the American Federation of Labor

December 9, 1869 Knights of Labor founded

December 10, 1886 American Federation of Labor founded

December 12, 1883 Railway engineers and firemen in Calgary strike against wage cuts

December 18, 1944 Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1374 at Greyhound chartered in Calgary

December 19, 1966 Proclamation of federal Medical Care Act

December 21, 1932 Edmonton Hunger March is ended by police violence with over 100 arrested

December 24, 1904 United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 496, Calgary granted charter

December 30, 1886 Knights of Labor establish first Alberta base with an assembly in Calgary

1910 Bellevue Mine disaster, resulting from poor maintenance of the mine, claims lives of 31 miners in explosion

Worker delivers ice to Edmonton home, 1920's, Provincial Archives of Alberta BL 616.5
Ten thousand times the labor movement has stumbled and bruised itself. We have been enjoined by the courts, assaulted by thugs, charged by the militia, traduced by the press, frowned upon in public opinion, and deceived by politicians. Despite all this and all these, labor is the most vital and potential power this planet has ever known, and its historic mission is as certain of ultimate realization as is the setting of the sun.

Eugene Debs
Celebrate 100 Years of Alberta Labour With Us!

Components of Project 2012

A new Alberta labour history book - edited by Alberta historian Alvin Finkel with contributions from seven other authors and over 100 historical photographs.

A series of historical booklets - on topics such as the history of Crownsnest Pass; the history of Alberta’s meatpacking industry; the 1995 Calgary laundry workers’ strike; a history of the AFL; and the law and Alberta labour.

Two series of historical posters - on the themes of Alberta’s radical past and the making of our movement.

Short videos - on such topics as the Parcels’ maternity case, the shutdown of the Hinton pulp mill, Alberta’s temporary foreign workers and one-industry towns in Alberta’s Coal Branch.

Project 2012 website - where you can download the booklets and posters, watch the videos and learn more about Alberta labour history.

2012 Centennial Activities

Maria Dunn Historical Music Tour - Widely acclaimed Alberta musician and songwriter Maria Dunn will perform one of two multi-media shows – ‘GWG: Piece by Piece’ or ‘Troublemakers’ - in several Alberta communities.

Displays in local museums and libraries - Several facilities will host labour history displays throughout 2012.

Labour history conference - Presentations by labour historians and story-telling sessions are just some of the components of this conference, June 13 to 15 at the University of Alberta.

An Alberta Homecoming - Past labour leaders and activists have been invited back to their communities for 2012 activities. A special dinner for former AFL Executive Council and staff takes place on June 15.

Celebration of Labour - A daylong celebration at Fort Edmonton Park on June 16 will be kicked off with a banner extravaganza and include displays, theatrical and musical performances, activities for kids and a dance.

In addition to the above, 2012 celebrations include a number of community events and partnerships, such as the Heritage Fair, which promotes labour history projects in schools. Look for our 2012 Celebration Program in March for a full list of centennial activities or check the Project 2012 website.

Sign up to receive up-to-date event information at: www.project2012.ca or www.labourhistory.ca