



2015 scholarship & bursary recipients

Geneva Houlden - GSU scholarship

Payton Stoppler - GSU scholarship

Mikayla Walker - GSU scholarship

Beth Zelensky - GSU scholarship

Recipients are chosen based on their essay submission and community involvement.
One 2015 GSU scholarship remains unclaimed.

Jennelle McArthur - GSU bursary

There is no essay requirement for the GSU First Nations University of Canada bursary. Our recipient is chosen by the First Nations University scholarship board based on credit hours, financial need, leadership, participation and involvement in on-campus and student activities.

Geneva Houlden

Political Science Major;
Crime, Law & Justice
Studies Minor

University of
Saskatchewan



Geneva was born and raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. She attended Aden Bowman and graduated with high honours in 2014. She just completed her first year in arts and science studying political studies, and is hoping to pursue a career in law one day.

Geneva has spent the last three summers working at the Saskatoon and District Labour Council's Summer Snack Program, a lunch program for kids in need in low income neighbourhoods. During the school year, Geneva is a member of student council and will be a peer mentor in the fall.

"I am very grateful to be a recipient of a GSU scholarship. It will definitely help me to pursue my educational goals and ease some of the stress that comes with ever-rising tuition rates. Thanks, GSU!"

Geneva is the daughter of GSU member Michelle Houlden (GSU Local 5 - Western Producer).



Are Unions Still Important Today?

Unions remain one of the most important institutions in the modern world. They have laid the foundation for equality in almost every industry, from retail stores to nursing to professional athletics.¹ Unions fundamentally improve the lives of the working class by protecting worker rights, providing wages and benefits that are better than those in non-unionized jobs, and increasing awareness and enforcement of important issues such as occupational health and safety. Freedom of assembly has been a significant part of our constitution for years, and unions can fill a much-needed void between the workers and management in a business setting.

Union organization began in the industrial age with the emergence of the working class. With a substantial increase in the labour force, workers fought to have a voice so their rights were being protected and so that they were being treated fairly by their companies. Workers formed unions all across Canada so they could work together to ensure their employers would treat them equally and democratically. "Many historians attribute unions to the rise of Canada's middle class and the general prosperity of the country."²

The work unions did at the turn of the century is just as important today, with the same positive results for the country. By protecting worker rights and earning higher wages, unionized workers are able to return that investment back into the economy in the form of buying houses, food, clothing, and other material goods. By increasing demand in the market, they are able to create more jobs and, therefore, stimulate economic growth. Higher wages also means workers can afford higher taxes in order to support public institutions such as schools, police services

¹ UFCW, "Facts about Unions," *UFCW Canada's Private Sector Union*, May 23, 2015.

² Ibid.

and health care. Even non-unionized workers benefit from the effect of having unions because non-unionized employers have to match wages and benefits to be able to attract the same caliber of workers as in unionized workplaces.

Unfortunately, both the provincial and federal governments have enacted or are in the process of trying to pass anti-union legislation to tear down the rights workers have fought to build over the past several decades. In 2007, Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall and his conservative government passed "Essential Services" legislation, which effectively undermined thousands of worker's ability to strike on the job. "Essential services are defined in Bill 5 as services where a full stop of activity would endanger public health and safety, would cause serious environmental damage or the destruction or serious deterioration of machinery, equipment or premises."³ In January 2015, after years of appeals and struggles in court, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the essential services act to be unconstitutional, and ruled in favour of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour et al. This historical, precedent-setting ruling will have significant implications for businesses and unions across Canada because it means the right to strike now is a constitutional right. Without unions, it never could have happened.

Unions are more important today than ever, and with the expansion of multi-national businesses and their overarching influence in society, unions need to stay strong and continue to protect the rights of the worker. Through education and participation, the labour force will remain an example for the rest of the world on how workers should be treated. Unions were born out of necessity and will remain essential until there is universal equality for all. It is a big job, but unions will always be up to the challenge.

³ "Saskatchewan Party Gov't Undermines Labour Rights," *CAUT Bulletin*, May, 2008.

Payton Stoppler

Medical Laboratory
Technology

Saskatchewan
Polytechnic
- Kelsey Campus



Payton Stoppler was raised in Montmartre, Saskatchewan. She completed her schooling in Montmartre and graduated from Montmartre High School in June 2015.

Payton will be attending the medical laboratory technology program at the Saskatchewan Polytechnic Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon.

"Thanks so much for the scholarship, it will definitely be put to good use! (Textbooks aren't cheap)."

Payton is the daughter of Timothy Stoppler (GSU Local 15 - Crop Production Services).



Ever since I was a little girl, both my parents played roles in the workforce under unions and have taught me why it is so beneficial to have them. Every day I am thankful for unions existing as they are the reason for families having a secure job and income. Although, according to Statistics Canada, only 31.5% of all workers belong in a union, we are to be thankful for them for giving us job and economic security for individuals, families and communities. Without unions almost all families would be struggling daily to make ends meet, all the while their children would be alongside them in unsafe factories.

Due to the power of a union, people are able to work on a livable level, and to come home knowing they have a benefit package that includes retirement and health insurance that ensures the safety of them and their family. Unions have enhanced provisions in areas such as vacation, extra medical insurance, disability, life insurance and a retirement income. These are all key principles to reduce stress within homes and lives, creating an atmosphere of positive aura. Without these benefits that come along with belonging to a union, workers would not be in a comfortable position if something were to ever happen to one of their family members or themselves. Unions provide a high job security rate, which provides workers with a dependable job position.

Unions provide workers to have a say in workplace decisions, and to be treated equally and fair. This is a good aspect due to the fact that it provides workers to improve the company positively and evolve into a firm workplace. With working inside the

building or workplace, workers can identify faults or problems and come up with better solutions rather than those who do not have the privileges of making workplace decisions. Alongside this, solutions and suggestions are taken into consideration and conducted more quickly.

Besides being good for individuals, unions are an important aspect for the purpose of democracy and economy that occurs locally, nationally and globally. Some of the important legislation decisions made over the past 100 years were influenced by the workers political views and interests. As for the economy part, unions allow a competitive high-wage, and productive work strategy. Due to the minimum wage rules and the competitiveness of the higher wages, workplaces often attract hard working individuals. This competitiveness is viewed to lead to productivity, quality and innovation – which all benefit to a better workplace.

Workers should be thankful for unions are the reason that they are given breaks at work, can live at a comfortable level where their health, vacation and safety is taken very seriously. They provide workers with a voice in their workplace along with safe working conditions. Studies have also shown that members belonging to unions earn significantly more than those that do not belong to a union. In contrast, unions are to be thanked for many reasons, but in particular for providing a safe and stable living and working conditions for individuals and their families.

Mikayla Walker

New Media
Communications and
Graphic Design

Saskatchewan
Polytechnic - Regina



Mikayla was born in Grande Prairie, AB. In 2015 Mikayla left her family and moved from Yorkton to live as a billet in Regina so she could be on the Regina Synchro team for her 12th year of synchro.

Mikayla recently completed her grade 12 year at Archbishop M.C O'Neill high school in Regina and this autumn she will attend Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Regina for a new media communications and graphic designing course. She also plans to continue her synchronized swimming.

"Thank you GSU for the scholarship!"

Mikayla is the daughter of GSU member Clinton Walker (GSU Local 4 - Grain Millers).



May 26, 2015

Mikayla Walker

Do unions still have an importance in today's world?

Recently I have been asked "Do unions still perform an important role in today's world?" Before I could answer that question, I had to find the answers to a couple of other questions such as "What is a union?" and "what are some myths and facts that exist?" Once I had those questions answered, I could answer the first question, and my answer was, yes, they do still perform an important role in today's world. Before I explain why my answer was what it was, I think it's important to explain the answers I found about the other questions I asked.

The first question I asked was "what is a union?" when I first asked this question it took a lot of questioning and research to find an answer that I completely understood. What I found is that a union is in fact not a mutiny against management, and it is not just natural employment. A union is something one can agree to be apart while employed. A union is a group of workers joined together to create better working conditions. They work together to change unacceptable working conditions to acceptable and beneficial working conditions so that one's working through the unacceptable conditions don't feel as though they're only option is to quit. A union gives the workers a fair and more enjoyable workplace and benefits. A union is a group that always has your back.

My second question I needed answered was "What are some myths and facts that exist with unions?" This question came up while I was trying to find the answer to my first question, "what is a union?" because I had found so many different answers to it, which most of them were all bias. I had received a different answer every time I asked. One person had told me that unions are just propaganda that make

themselves sound good, then once one joins, they force them to be in strikes and lower your wage.

While there has been strikes that unions organized, that statement is a myth. Whilst in a union, one will not be forced to be in a strike. It is a fact that there has been strikes, but it is the union's decision that they make as one and a decision that they rarely make. Another myth that people have passed around is that once one joins a union, their wages and benefits they already have will be taken away. In fact it is illegal for an employer to cut down wages and benefits to discourage their employees from joining a union. Once one joins a union, they can put in what they currently have and negotiate from there. One will be able to review the given contract from the employer before approving it, and if the wages and benefits are less, it can be disapproved.

Now finally, the last question standing. "Do unions still perform an important role in today's world?" and the answer to that was "Yes". Now the question is "Why?" The description of a union itself can explain why. A union gives workers a chance to negotiate their own benefits they see fit. It gives workers a chance to change their workplace to a more enjoyable place to work and can keep people from quitting due to poor working conditions. It gives workers a chance to have a say, and to have a say in one's workplace is important. Being heard and having one voice spoken is a million other questions and concerns answered. It's important to have proper benefits and wages met, so that people can survive in and out of their workplace and don't have to have those worries on their shoulders and a union gives that relief to them.

Unions create a better workplace and are important to have around. No matter what one hears or even says about unions, whether it's positive or negative, the answer will remain as a "Yes" unions will always perform an important role in the world. They performed an important role in yesterday's world, they perform an important role in today's world and will perform an important role in tomorrow's world. The world changes every day, new things come in and old things go out. Lots of things become irrelevant in

this modern society, but the importance of unions will forever remain and will always be needed. It's important to always have someone to have ones back, and that's what a union does.

Beth Zelensky

Major in Agronomy

University of Saskatchewan
College of Agriculture
& Bioresources



Beth was born in Prince Albert, SK and raised on a farm just north of the city. She graduated from Meath Park School in 2014.

This autumn Beth will be a second year student in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan where she is majoring in Agronomy.

"I would like to thank the Grain and General Services Union for their generous scholarship. It's greatly appreciated, and will be a huge help as I pursue the rest of my schooling."

Beth is a GSU member in Local 16 (Prince Albert Co-op) where she has spent the past two summers working as a summer student.



GSU Scholarship

A union collectively uses their strength and right to have a voice in the workplace. With a union present, employees are able to voice an opinion on topics such as wages, work hours, benefits, workplace health and safety, etc. About 30% of working Canadians are members of unions, including teachers, journalists, nurses, retail clerks, miners, and also trade workers! There are so many people who are dependant on unions and who benefit from them. I am proud to say that I am one of these people that benefit from a union and believe in what they stand for.

Unions have fought lasting and hard for health and safety rights for workers. Workers have a right to a safe work environment. With my current summer job there's always a lot of commotion going on in the yard throughout the day. There are trucks coming and going for fertilizer or bulk seed, augers under bins, forklift carrying chemical and seed...so in a workplace such as this there are a lot of hazards. Unions have a long and proud history of creating a safe work environment for all workers. For that reason we have a daily checklist that is completed before anyone operates the forklift. Before someone drives the semi that is on site there is a safety checklist and a walk around checklist that must be finished. The logic behind these safety checklists is for anyone who operates the machinery next will not have to worry about getting injured. Every employee has a right to refuse unsafe work.

Many of the vehicles and machinery around the yard are carrying chemical, fertilizer or grain. All of these have the potential to cause personal harm if the employees have not had the proper and required training to carefully transport the contents. This is why unions have implemented training programs, hard hats, steel

toe boots, gloves, reflective vests, and the list goes on and on. These are all provided to the employee to ensure proper work ethics after being trained. Everyone has their role at the workplace and no matter what they are doing whether its working in the chem shed, loading trucks with grain or fertilizer, or scouting fields; they have benefitted from the additional training that unions have provided.

Unions deal a lot with the topic of wages. They try to make it fair for every employee based on their education and training. Union members often seek greater retirement benefits to have a more secure future and retire above that poverty line. Jobs are becoming extremely scarce in todays economy. Job security is the heart for union members. The members of unions are protected by the accommodation for job protection that gives them piece of mind that their current jobs will not be outsourced.

Today and in the future unions will continue to play an important role in the country's work force and creating equality between employees. Unions have created contracts that protect workers; giving them a right to refuse unsafe work, provide training programs, job security, and much more. Unions are here for advice and support. They are, and always will be an important asset to the workforce.

Beth Zelensky


Jenelle McArthur

Indigenous Social Work

First Nations University
of Canada



I was lost for words when I was informed that I have been chosen to be the recipient of the generous bursary that is being awarded by the Grain and General Services. This particular day I had to talk to my student advisor about my financial difficulty to see if he had any suggestions for my financial hardships. I went from my advisors office to the office next door where I was told the heart lifting, stress relieving news that I have been chosen for this bursary! It is amazing how quickly life can change. I felt an incredible amount of gratitude towards humanity and for the generosity that exists within our world. I am still wondering why receiving an education is made to be a difficult task when there is so much willing and wanting students that have the desire to become the best they can be. It should not be a financial burden to pursue a post secondary education. Thankfully there are organizations that support students to pursue their goals.

I feel appreciated and recognized for doing what I am passionate about doing. This bursary motivates me to continue on the path that I am on. I feel rewarded for making the choices I have made, thus far.

I have currently completed my 5th semester of the Indigenous Social Work Program. I am well into my degree and I have truly found my passion for my studies. Through my studies I have gained a great understanding of who I am. I have great intentions for my life. Your generosity has given me a sense of pride for being able to provide for me and my children. On behalf of my children and me, thank you!!



GSU scholarship

GSU is pleased to offer \$2,000 scholarships to five students who demonstrate an ability and a passion to inspire positive change in their community.

The scholarship competition is open to GSU members, their spouses, and dependent children who have not previously won.

Scholarship applicants must be enrolled in a diploma, degree, or certificate program at a community college, university, trade school, or technical institute as a full-time student in any country.

GSU First Nations University of Canada bursary

The bursary is open to an Aboriginal student enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours at the First Nations University of Canada.

Applicants must have successfully completed a minimum of 30 credit hours (not including ENGL 90/91 and AMTH 001/002/003 classes) to a maximum of 60 credit hours in any area of study leading to a degree.

Financial need, leadership, participation and involvement in on-campus and student activities will be considered in the selection of recipient.

Information on GSU scholarships and our bursary are available on GSU's web page at www.gsu.ca.

