




Photo: Harold Molera

Members of the Aboriginal Circle joined with Smokey and others at OPSEU Head Office for a tree-planting ceremony in honour of Tim Brown  
Left to right: Krista Maracle, L571; Alis Kennedy, L551; Warren (Smokey) Thomas, Pauline Saulnier, L314; Gary Dickey, L110; Ken Fraser, L329

## Remembering Tim Brown

Tim Brown, a child and youth counsellor at Vanier Children's Services in London and a member of Local 144, was a long-time chair of OPSEU's Aboriginal Circle equity group, and was one of the group's founding members along with Isabelle Cormier. Tim also served as vice-president for Aboriginal Peoples with the Ontario Federation of Labour.

"We learned an enormous lesson from Brother Tim," said president Smokey Thomas. "It was this: no longer will Canada's people be satisfied with occupying a secondary role in our society nor, for that matter, in organized labour. In OPSEU, his was the articulate and wise voice of our native members, their customs and traditions and the communities they represent."

"Through all his efforts, abilities and skills, Tim built a strong foundation for the OPSEU Aboriginal Circle." said Chair, Pauline Saulnier. "Our members each treasure the short time we had with this wonderful man and we will always carry him with us in our hearts. We will miss his hugs and we will miss his laughter but we will never forget him. We hope that we can make him proud." 

# Pension reform – strategic plans to expand and protect our investments

By Greg Hamara

The financial tsunami of the past two years has claimed many innocent victims, none more so than the millions of hard-working people who invested in pension plans only to witness their value vaporize at the hands of incompetent and greedy investment brokers.

OPSEU believes organized labour has a key role to play in preventing similar tragedies from unfolding in the future. In partnership with other labour and advocacy groups it is developing and implementing strategies on several fronts to expand and protect the investments of working people so that when retirement arrives so, too, will their pension cheques.

Pension plans need to be protected from the vagaries of the marketplace. Current legislation needs to be reformed so that defined pension plans are shielded from market forces beyond the control of hard-working contributors.

It's for that reason OPSEU has advocated strongly in favour of expanding the Canada Pension Plan. Only one in five private sector workers can look forward to the prospect of a pension and it is the responsibility of the federal government to expand pension benefits so that these workers can achieve the right to a decent standard of living upon their retirement.

OPSEU supported changes to the Ontario Pension Benefits Act, which was passed by Queen's Park earlier this year. The reforms include immediate vesting and allowing divested members to consolidate their pensions in one plan if they choose to do so. In a similar vein, OPSEU and the Ontario Pension Trust (OPT) have endorsed the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investing and other major plans such as HOOP are expected to follow suit.

The executive board of OPSEU has also taken an active role by establishing a task force, made up of board members, staff and trustees, which evaluated the union's policies with respect to pension governance, trustee development and recruitment. The board unanimously approved the task force's recommended amendments to the pension policy at the September 2010 board meeting. 