

P019 Mike Solski fonds

1917-1999 [predominant dates: 1933-1999]

8.35m of textual records and other types of documents

Biographical sketch: Mike Solski (1918-1999) was born to Anna Bialy and Joseph Solski on Oct. 2, 1918, in Coniston, Ontario. In 1939, he married Irene Horrick, and together they had one daughter named Sandra. From 1935 to 1947, he worked for the International Nickel Company of Canada Ltd. (INCO) in Coniston.

Solski played an important role in the labour movement in the Sudbury district. He held various positions within the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW) Local 598, from 1942 until 1959. Local 598 was recognized as the largest union local in North America in the 1950s. He led the 1958 strike. In 1959, he was defeated by Don Gillis, after he served six consecutive years as President of the Local. Solski served as the Eastern Canadian Director for District 2 of IUMMSW from August 1960 to August 1961.

Mike Solski was also active in local politics. From 1962 until 1972, he served as Mayor of the Town of Coniston and from 1967- 1973 he was President of the Sudbury and District Municipal Association. He ran unsuccessfully in the Riding of Sudbury East in the 1967 Provincial election. When Regional Government was implemented in 1973, he was voted in as Mayor of the Township of Nickel Centre and held the position until 1978, when he was wounded by gunshots fired at his final council meeting. Solski also served for three separate terms as Vice-Chairperson of the Regional Municipality of Sudbury in 1973, 1977 and 1978.

Between 1973 and 1978, Solski was a member of various boards such as: the Sudbury Regional Police Commission, the Police Governing Authority of Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Sudbury General Hospital Board, the Coniston Hydro Commission, and the Liberal Association. He retired in 1978.

During his retirement, Solski remained involved in community concerns, and expressed his opinions through open letters in local newspapers. His main area of interest was local history, and in 1980 he founded the Coniston Historical Group and served as President. He is also the co-author of *Mine Mill: The History of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Canada since 1895* (1984). In 1997 he received a certificate from the Ontario Heritage Foundation for his contributions to both the community of Coniston, and toward the research and production of *The Coniston Story* (1982 and 1990). In 1999, Solski joined The Sudbury Regional Restructuring Association, to support regional reform. Mike Solski passed away on October 19, 1999.

Scope and content: The Mike Solski fonds consists of correspondence, notes, and various printed material from Mine Mill Local 598 that includes leaflets and copies of *Local 598 News*, *Mine Mill Herald* and *The Beacon*. The fonds contains tape recordings of interviews, videos, transcripts, assorted memorabilia, photographs, and newspaper clippings that were collected by Solski. The fonds also includes records for the Sudbury

and District Municipal Association such as minutes and correspondence, and printed material that relates to the Coniston Town Council, Coniston Historical Society, and the Sudbury Regional Restructuring Association.

The mining labour movement in Northern Ontario is well documented in these records. The records also attest to the professional achievements of Solski as labour leader, politician and author in the Sudbury district. They provide insight to a significant period of the labour movement in Sudbury that covers the 1958 Strike, the 1961 Steelworkers' Raids, and the 1967 merger of Mine Mill and Steelworkers. The records also provide information about regional politics in the Sudbury and District area during the years 1962-1978. Tape interviews with Mick Lowe, from a project to write the biography of Solski, provide an overview of the personal life of Solski, and views of Solski regarding achievements in his public life. There are also videotapes and assorted memorabilia with respect to Federal Liberal Party Conventions. The fonds reflects his years as a lifelong resident of Coniston who remained an active citizen and community leader until his death in 1999.

Five reels of microfilm of the Mike Solski fonds held at the Archives of Ontario, are included in the Mike Solski fonds at Laurentian University (with the finding aid).

Note: Immediate source of acquisition: This fonds was received in five accruals. The first two accruals were donated by Mike Solski on October 24, 1995 and November 12, 1996.

- : **Reproduction/publication:** The Copyright Act regulations apply
- : **Accruals:** The third accrual was transferred from the Sudbury Public Library on May 15, 1998. The fourth accrual was received from Mercedes Steadman in September 2000. The last accrual was donated by Sandra Solski Spratt in October 2000.
- : **Finding aids:** A finding aid is available at Laurentian University Archives
- : **Related material:** The following fonds may contain complimentary information:
 - P009 N.O.L.I.A. fonds
 - P026 I.U.M.M.S.W. fonds
 - P059 Jim Tester fonds
 - INORD series (1993)