



The Golden Tree monument honours farmworkers killed and injured

More than eight years after a tragic motor vehicle crash killed three farmworkers in Abbotsford, a monument is being erected to recognize the valuable contribution of farmworkers in Canada, to honour the women who died, and draw attention to the devastating impact of unsafe work.

The accident took place in March 2007 when 17 farmworkers were unsafely crammed into a van transporting them to work that morning. The van, which was not equipped with enough seats or seatbelts for everyone, went out of control on a highway, killing three women and injuring several more.

That led to a coroner's inquest, a provincial review of agricultural transportation, and a call from the labour movement – pioneered by the B.C. Fed – to make farm work safer.

The Golden Tree, which was designed by B.C. artists Dean and Christine Lauzé, is a stunning 22-foot apple tree that twists and merges into three female-like forms.

The memorial website describes the monument as “a breathtaking representation of the three women lost that day, forever entwined, raising their arms to enlightenment and hope. The Tree will stand as a fitting legacy to Sarbjit Kaur Sidhu, Amarjit Kaur Bal and Sukhvinder Kaur Punia, and as a monument to all farmworkers who have been killed or seriously injured while working to put food on our table, honouring their sacrifice.

“For today's farmworkers and their families, the monument will stand as a beacon of hope for safe and healthy working conditions in the agricultural industry, and as a reminder of the devastating consequences of cutting corners on safety.”

The Golden Tree: A Monument to Farmworkers will be unveiled in a special ceremony on Saturday, October 3 at 11:00 a.m. at the International Friendship Centre (32320 George Ferguson Way, Abbotsford) with speeches by family members, project partners and local politicians, followed by a light lunch.

October 1, 2015