

# Day of MOURNING

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## Speaker profile - Rosemarie Lachnit

### Telling the story of one death to prevent others



Rosemarie Lachnit shares the painful story of the death of her 20-year-old son and its aftermath to help others avoid such a tragedy.

That's why the single mother has traveled from her hometown of Whitehorse to speak at this year's Day of Mourning ceremony, honouring B.C. workers who lost their lives in the workplace.

Nicholas died on a Surrey condominium construction site in 2005, his first time living away from home. He fell three storeys from an unguarded, open balcony and landed head-first on a pipe sticking out of the ground.

Rosemarie was at her son's hospital bed 12 hours after getting the news in Yukon. "Seeing Nicholas was devastating — two black eyes; tubes coming out of his face; the head wound still bleeding."

"He died of a brain injury that night. Just before Nicholas slipped away, I was holding his hand and said, 'you can go. It's all right – I'll be okay,' recounts Rosemarie." His arm moved then, and it felt like he was acknowledging what I told him."

"The irony is that Nicholas didn't like big city life and intended to move back to Whitehorse. Now, I was going home alone."

That was 13 years ago, and she still thinks of him every day. "We had more than the mother-son relationship. Nicholas was my best friend."

"In the first months, no one I talked to actually understood my pain; but it's different now." WorkSafeBC started its Family Peer Support Program for grieving families in 2009.

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Rosemarie is a volunteer, lending an ear and helping others deal with inexplicable loss.

"My son's death was stupid and unnecessary. He had no fall protection. It was the second incident like this on his job site in two months," she says. "The contractor and sub-contractor were fined, but the people who shared his life paid a much higher price."

Rosemarie wants to help people learn from Nicholas' story.

"We still need to do more to prevent incidents like the one suffered by my son. It's the eager-to-please young people who need to be more aware of the potential dangers in the workplace."

"We need employers to take responsibility for the safety of their workers, especially the young workers. We need to remind these young workers that they have the right to say "no" if they feel unsafe."

Rosemarie calls for community responsibility to "protect our sons and daughters. We must end the need for Day of Mourning. Employers, workers, families — everyone must fight every day to see that no more children are lost." That's her message for Nicholas.

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