Rio Tinto Campaign

Syndicat des Métallos
United Steelworkers

CRIMT Forum, October 26, 2012
Multilevel Campaigns
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USW Education and Strategic Campaigns
Rio Tinto Campaign – Background
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- Company demand to replace retiring unionized employees with contract workers at half the wages and no benefits, no union

When employees refused to accept....
LOCKED OUT
Obstacles for USW

• World-wide overcapacity in Aluminum
• Aluminum prices declining
• Rio Tinto – Divesting of Aluminum Operations
• Rio Tinto – Global Company with Deep Pockets and Could Withstand Long Labour Dispute
Advantages for Union

• Strong organized USW Local in Alma
• Strong community support in Québec
• USW Strike and Defense Fund
• Potential to organize globally through Global Union Federations
• Strong message: workers standing up not for themselves but for future generations
Des emplois pour nos jeunes!

Justice for Rio Tinto Workers
Strategic Corporate Research

• Strategic research uncovers two key vulnerabilities:
• Massive mobilization of unions and communities in Québec
• Raising the issue of Québec Hydro throughout the province and putting pressure on Liberal government
• Tying Rio Tinto scandal to Liberal government
• Large demonstrations in Montréal and Québec City
Olympics Campaign

• Branding of a global campaign “Off the Podium”
• Use of social media – 13,000+ letters to IOC
• Using Global Union Federations to organize global actions against Rio Tinto’s participation in the Olympics
• Joining with the London Mining Network to campaign in London against Rio Tinto
• Pressuring directly the London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games to take Rio Tinto “Off the Podium”
Other Key Actions

- Shareholder actions at AGMs in London, England and Brisbane, Australia
- Huge demonstration in Alma of 8,000 persons from across Québec and Canada and from 12 countries
- Visits and solidarity actions with key trade unions in the UK, France, United States and Australia
- Demonstration in Québec City at meeting of the International Olympic Committee
- Demonstrations at headquarters of the International Olympic Committee
- Direct meetings by Unite (largest private union sector union) with the London Organizing Committee for Olympic Games
- Joining in rallies with students in Québec
Result and Aftermath

• New CBA preserving jobs for future generations in Alma and surrounding communities
• New CBA at Rio Tinto in Kitimat, BC for CAW members – without these demands
• New CBA at another Rio Tinto plant for USW members in Québec
• Leading to establishment of new Rio Tinto Global Union Network of Trade Unions
• Reversing long string of defeats for organized labour – US Steel, Caterpillar, etc.
“Our members and their families suffered for six long months but never wavered. It began in the small town of Alma, but it became a defining labour struggle in Quebec, Canada, and around the world. Our members are walking back into the plant as heroes.” -- Marc Maltais, President, USW Local 9490