

May 2011

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

IN SOLIDARITY WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

June 21 is National Aboriginal Day – a day for all Canadians to get out on the first day of summer and celebrate the cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples to our country.

While June 21 is set aside for celebration, let us not forget the dismal record of inaction on the part of the Harper Conservative government when it comes to improving the situation of Aboriginal peoples in this country, including:

- Putting a stop to the Kelowna Accord which represented a national consensus to end the persistence of poverty and shameful conditions of overcrowding, unsafe housing, crumbling infrastructure and lack of access to safe, clean drinking water for Aboriginal peoples.
- Lack of meaningful action to deal with the crisis of no access to clean water for many of Canada's First Nations communities.
- Ignoring the pleas to change the formula for funding First Nations schools, which are at a severe disadvantage when compared to other schools in the country.
- Continuing to discriminate against First Nations children by providing less child welfare benefits to those children living on reserves than to those living off reserves.

CUPE continues to get involved in many ways in the struggles of Aboriginal peoples, including supporting the work of Shannen's Dream to highlight the need for better schools, demonstrating on Parliament Hill for improved funding for First Nations education, sponsoring camps for Aboriginal youth, signing partnership agreements to increase employment opportunities, and lobbying against the cuts to the Native Women of Canada Sisters In Spirit project.

.../2



Please help celebrate June 21 by getting involved – there are many ways that your local and you as members can do this:


- Renew the union's commitment to Aboriginal representation in all workplaces, at all levels of employment and union decision-making.
- Challenge racist stereotypes and myths about tax exemption, free education, reverse discrimination and the erosion of seniority.
- Strengthen our commitment to partnership agreements, aligning ourselves with Aboriginal institutions and battling under-representation of Aboriginal peoples in our union and workplaces.
- Advocate for safe drinking water and stopping the spread of public/private partnerships on reserves.
- Continue discussions through CUPE National Aboriginal Council on justice for Dudley George, freedom for Leonard Peltier, and support of all land claims.
- Learn about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was established as a result of the settlement of claims by survivors of abuse at residential schools.
- Get involved in Indigenous Sovereignty Week, which organizes activities dealing with Aboriginal issues in various places across the country, with the aim of building a cross-Canada movement for Indigenous rights, self-determination, and justice.
- Lobby governments to take significant action to implement the substantive rights contained in the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Support the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society – please see ways you can contribute at (<http://www.fncfcs.com/what-you-can-do>).
- Support the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.
- Create opportunities to improve literacy and essential skills for Aboriginal peoples.
- Get involved in campaigns to stop Violence Against Aboriginal Women, such as the Walk for Justice and other Native Women's Association of Canada initiatives.

CUPE National reaffirms its commitment to fight for equality, justice, full inclusion and the right to self-government for all Aboriginal peoples and we encourage all members to celebrate National Aboriginal Day on June 21 and participate in other activities during that week.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CLAUDE GÉNÉREUX
National Secretary-Treasurer