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## **National Aboriginal Day**

Since 1996, Canadians have marked National Aboriginal Day on June 21. It is a time to celebrate the cultures and contributions of the original peoples of Turtle Island. CUPE Ontario is proud to support this annual celebration and our members who organize and participate in events on this day.

This year is the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. This proclamation recognized Native land rights and governed negotiations over land between the crown and First Nations. Created following the Seven Years War, it is one of the most important documents in our legal history and the First Nations rights and freedoms recognized by it are enshrined today in section 25 of the Constitution Act.

Governments would do well to recognize this important piece of history and take time to consider their obligations to original peoples of Turtle Island, including basic necessities such as safe water, health care and economic sustainability.

CUPE Ontario also rejects the Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius – two concepts recognized in international law that assume unoccupied land are unowned, and which have been used by colonizers to justify claiming Native lands.

In addition to being the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Proclamation, 2013 is also CUPE Ontario's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our union has a strong history of solidarity with aboriginal peoples, of fighting racial discrimination and of working to improve the livelihood of First Peoples both within our union and throughout our province.

We applaud CUPE Ontario's Aboriginal Council for its ongoing leadership. CUPE Ontario was also the first provincial wing of the union to create a constitutionally mandated diversity vice-president representing aboriginal members on the executive board. That position is currently held by Sister Joanne Webb.

The Aboriginal Council has continued to outreach to Aboriginal communities through the attendance at Pow Wows and Aboriginal Day celebrations, as well as working collaboratively with many initiatives that seek to deal with the many challenges that Aboriginal communities are facing, such as:

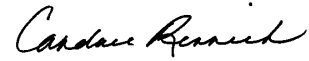
CUPE Ontario, through the Aboriginal Council, has supported the "Idle no More" movement, demanding the repeal of federal legislation, including bills C-45 and C-38, which unfairly target First Nations and Aboriginal peoples. We continue to show solidarity with Leonard Peltier, supporting the annual vigil and calling for his release, to demand justice for missing and murdered Aboriginal women,

and to highlight issues of safe drinking water in Aboriginal communities. Our Aboriginal Council is also educating members regarding the relationship of the Seventh Generation Principle to our work as trade unionists, knowing the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world.

And so, as we celebrate the vibrancy and great traditions of our First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples on National Aboriginal Day, CUPE Ontario reaffirms its commitment to fight for equality, justice, full inclusion and the right to self-government for all aboriginal peoples.



President



Secretary-Treasurer

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