



80 Commerce Valley Drive East, Suite 1
Markham, ON L3T 0B2
Phone: 905-739-9739 • Fax: 905-739-9740
Web: cupe.on.ca E-mail: info@cupe.on.ca

National Aboriginal Day

On this, the longest day of the year, we celebrate many of North America's oldest cultures and longest struggles. June 21 is National Aboriginal Day in Canada, a day to celebrate culture, to recognize achievements and to renew our commitment to continue working for a more equal and inclusive society.

Ontario is home to almost 300,000 Aboriginal People representing a rich diversity of First Nations and Metis cultures. Together with the CUPE Ontario Aboriginal Council, we encourage all members to join events in their communities to celebrate, learn and build solidarity across our union and across our province.

As we celebrate, we must also look to the work that remains to be done to build a fair Ontario. With the crisis in Attawapiskat we were once more reminded that thousands of First Peoples live in deplorable conditions and that governments are failing to provide basic necessities such as clean water, safe housing and access to health care.

CUPE Ontario will continue its work to end the inequality that has been allowed to exist for too long in our province. We supported Shannen's Dream – the campaign for "safe and comfy" schools begun by Shannen Koostachin. Sadly, Shannen died in a car accident two years ago at the age of 15. At the time she was hundreds of kilometers from her Attawapiskat home, attending an off-reserve school.

Shannen's Dream came one big step closer to reality on February 27, 2012. On that day, MPs in the House of Commons voted unanimously to support Motion 201, a private-members' bill introduced by New Democrat MP Charlie Angus to turn Shannen's Dream into law. It is an important step toward good schools on reserves, and thus an important step toward equality and an end to poverty in communities like Attawapiskat.

This is just a beginning. We marched with Grassy Narrows First Nations again this year in their decades-long struggle for a cleanup of the mercury that is poisoning their community. We continue to call for freedom for activist Leonard Peltier. And we continue to benefit every day from the dedicated work of the CUPE Ontario Aboriginal Council and our Diversity Vice-President for Aboriginal Workers, Joanne Webb.

In solidarity,

Fred Hahn

Candace Rennick

President

Secretary Treasurer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Hahn".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Candace Rennick".