



HEU recognizes First Nations members on National Aboriginal Day – June 21

June 21 marks the day where Canadians come together to celebrate the unique heritage, traditions and contributions First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples bring to our country's culture.

The Hospital Employees' Union has been a pioneer in advocating for the legal right to organize, certify and negotiate contracts for First Nations health care workers regardless of where they live.

HEU took this fight all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada – winning a landmark case on July 19, 1999 – after the union organized Gitksan health care workers. That ruling has helped other Canadian unions organize First Nations workers on- and off-reserve.

Today, HEU represents First Nations members who work in wide-ranging services at health care sites across the province.

Last spring, the union held its inaugural provincial First Nations Bargaining Conference in Prince Rupert – bringing together representatives from each nation – Nisga'a, Gitksan (Gitanyow, Gitwangak), Skidegate (Haida Gwaii) and Stz'uminus – to share bargaining ideas and strategies.

Many of those priorities are currently at the HEU First Nations bargaining tables as the union negotiates contract renewals for more than 100 members.

The union's First Nations Standing Committee encourages all HEU locals to show solidarity and participate in one of B.C.'s National Aboriginal Day activities, particularly any community events that draw attention to missing and murdered Aboriginal women, safe drinking water on reserves, and environmental concerns over proposed pipeline projects.

First proclaimed by Canada's Governor General in 1996, National Aboriginal Day provides an opportunity to acknowledge the unique achievements of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

After consultation with Aboriginal organizations, the federal government chose June 21 for National Aboriginal Day because it is also the summer solstice – the longest day of the year – a day on which many generations of Aboriginal peoples have celebrated their culture and heritage.

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