



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

June 21 marks the day where Canadians join 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.

And HEU took that fight all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada – winning a landmark case on July 19, 1999 – after the union organized Gitksan health workers. That ruling has helped other Canadian unions organize First Nations workers regardless of where they live.

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

As a union with strong social justice principles, HEU has joined the call for an independent national inquiry into the murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls – one that would also address the appalling and ongoing violence indigenous women experience today.

Recently, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was released. This is a very painful, but very important milestone for First Nations people – and for all Canadians.

In part, the report outlines the damage to First Nations communities by the residential school experience in Canada, and hopefully the work of the Commission will pave the road to building a respectful relationship with First Nations that can build trust and move us forward.

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 and girls, 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.

*June 19, 2015*