May 2013

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

JUNE 21 – NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY
"IN SOLIDARITY WITH IDLE NO MORE"

June 21 is National Aboriginal Day, a day for all Canadians to celebrate the cultures and contributions to Canada of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples.

Canada’s First Peoples have much to celebrate this year, as the strength, courage and passion demonstrated through the Idle No More movement made headlines across the country and shed new light on the challenges we face to ensure everyone who shares this land is treated fairly and justly.

CUPE will continue to support this movement in its struggle for social justice, and in its efforts to confront the Conservative government’s regressive and damaging policies toward First Peoples in Canada.

The Harper government has continuously cut funding to First Peoples’ organizations and services. They have not developed any substantive policy measures that would meaningfully address the needs of First Peoples.

Idle No More activists have drawn widespread attention to the environmental implications of the Conservative government’s omnibus bills C-38 and C-45, which support the exploitation of the environment by big resource development companies. These bills made widespread regulatory changes that threaten the air, water, soil and ecosystems that everyone depend on – especially First Peoples living near proposed development projects. These bills weaken Canada’s environmental laws, remove critical safeguards, and reduce the public’s opportunity to have a say about resource development projects.

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Investing in First Peoples means fulfilling the government’s obligations as outlined in treaties with First Peoples. Meaningful consultation on policies and legislation that affect First Peoples is also a key part of the federal government’s obligation to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We encourage CUPE members to take action supporting the ongoing struggle of First Peoples for social and environmental justice.

- Learn more about First Peoples from our allies: the Métis National Council, the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, and the National Association of Friendship Centres.
- Support Idle No More. Attend an Idle No More event in your community or invite an Idle No More activist to speak at one of your events. See idlenomore.ca for details.
- Support the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society in their fight for the rights of First Nations’ children to health care, education and social services. Find out how you can contribute at fnfcfs.com/what-you-can-do.
- Support CUPE’s Enough is Enough campaign to insist that all First Peoples have the right to clean, safe drinking water. The campaign was developed in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations and the Safe Drinking Water Foundation. Sign the petition at cupe.ca/action/Enough-is-Enough.

CUPE reaffirms its commitment to fight for equality, justice, full inclusion and the right to self-government for all Aboriginal peoples. We encourage all members to celebrate National Aboriginal Day.

In solidarity,

PAUL MOIST
National President
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CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer