

## National Aboriginal Day

**June 21, 2017**

Celebrating Indigenous peoples' culture, history and achievements is important throughout Aboriginal History Month, but of added significance on June 21, National Aboriginal Day. As Canada marks its 150 years of Confederation we must acknowledge both the effects of this nationhood on Indigenous people and the fact that Indigenous people have lived on these lands for thousands of years.

Canada has a dark history of colonialism and of the cultural genocide of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. The multi-generational trauma of residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, contamination of drinking waters, murdered and missing Indigenous women and systemic discrimination in health, education and other services are but a few examples of the experiences that litter the path to reconciliation.

To create just relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that are mutually respectful of Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty, we must recognize that non-Indigenous people in Canada continue to benefit from exploitative relationships with Indigenous populations.

On this, National Aboriginal Day, Unifor calls on the federal government to take real, measurable actions towards reconciling our past with our future. Supportive words alone are inadequate. The federal government must immediately provide equal funding for on-reserve child welfare systems and end the discrimination against Indigenous children.

Understanding that we share a collective responsibility to walk the path towards reconciliation, Unifor remains committed to extending solidarity to Indigenous peoples. Together with CN Rail, Unifor has provided \$250,000 for awards and bursaries to assist Indigenous youth in their pursuit of post-secondary studies and Unifor has further donated \$100,000 to the First Nations Family and Caring Society to support educational initiatives for Indigenous children.

Unifor's Canadian Community Fund has also recently provided \$140,000 to support the construction of a training center for workers building the "Freedom Road" which will bring fresh water to Shoal Lake 40, a reserve that has been under a water advisory for almost two decades.

Our Union takes these steps with the full understanding that together we can change the course of our history and create a future and create one that proudly recognizes the knowledge, rights and resilience of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.