



Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada

## **CLC statement in support of National Aboriginal Day June 21, 2008**

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The recent and historic apology made to the survivors and their families of the Indian residential school system is an important moment. It is appropriate the Prime Minister and leaders of other parties publicly accepted responsibility of behalf of the country for the injustice, the racism, the neglect and the human rights violations of the residential school system.

Acknowledging, apologizing and asking for forgiveness of a government policy designed to "kill the Indian in the child", is not an easy step. It is however, just one step and the Canadian Labour Congress representing 3.2 million workers knows that we must be prepared to go further.

Today, June 21, 2008 National Aboriginal Day is an appropriate moment to honour and recognize the first peoples of this land. And, just 10 days after the historic apology, today the Canadian Labour Congress urges the government of Canada to demonstrate that bold actions will accompany the apology.

We urge the government of Canada to take bold steps to ensure that high quality education is available to Aboriginal communities. Improving educational levels amongst aboriginal youth, can translate into enormous economic and productivity gains for the country, and most importantly it can ensure equality of opportunity.

We urge the government of Canada to live up to the national consensus commitments made under the Kelowna Accord and to end the persistence of poverty and shameful conditions of overcrowding, unsafe housing, crumbling infrastructure and lack of access to safe clean drinking water. Thousands who have read the report [Boiling Point](#), an expose of just six First Nations struggle to access potable water, agree that aggressive action to change these situations is long overdue.

We urge the government to end the practice of gender inequity and demonstrate a commitment to equality for First Nation Women. The case of Sharon McIvor and her struggle with the Court Challenges Program stands as prominent case requiring immediate redress.

We urge this government to abide by and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to stop undermining this Declaration in practice.

The survivors and their families of the Indian residential schools system endured terrible suffering and injustice and despite our shameful history, they demonstrate tremendous courage to resist being colonized, to resist racism and to resist dehumanizing policies and practices of assimilation.

They have demonstrated that change is possible.

Today, June 21, National Aboriginal Day is a moment to join in this change with actions that can be a true turning point for us all.