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To all BCGEU members
Please post and distribute
June 14, 2007

Aboriginal Solidarity Day ~ June 21

Supporting aboriginal people's quest for justice

A message from BCGEU President George Heyman:

How long must a people wait for the return of their ancestral lands and their constitutional right to self-government? In BC, the majority of aboriginal people have been forced to wait for generations. Despite their continued efforts through legal avenues such as court proceedings and treaty negotiations, there's been little progress in achieving justice.

There is a limit to anyone's patience, when you've experienced more than a century of broken promises. Little wonder then that a number of aboriginal communities in BC will be heeding the Assembly of First Nations' call for a national day of action this June 29. Like unions, aboriginal communities must sometimes resort to peaceful protest to draw attention to unjust situations.

The BCGEU is committed to supporting aboriginal people to the best of our ability as a labour organization. Our union has long recognized and actively supported treaty negotiations and the right of First Nations to self-government and self-determination. The BCGEU supports the principled transfer of responsibilities for their own education, health, and social services to aboriginal communities. We have also insisted that these transfers be properly funded and resourced, and that the workers must be treated with respect and have their rights protected.

I'm proud that the BCGEU currently represents 18 aboriginal non-profit and band council certifications. We represent hundreds more aboriginal members in government services.

Our union is committed to organizing and serving aboriginal members with cultural sensitivity. This includes creating collective agreement language that addresses the cultural needs of aboriginal workers. We have also established an Aboriginal Network to ensure aboriginal members have a strong voice in our union.

The BCGEU celebrates June 21 as Aboriginal Solidarity Day. I urge you to take time to learn more about BC aboriginal history, and reflect on how you can support fellow aboriginal union members in the quest for dignity and justice in our union, workplaces and communities.

There is much to redress so we can move forward into the 21st century with respect and equality.



Get free copies of the new BCGEU Aboriginal Solidarity Day poster from your local area office. Original art by Haida artist April White - Sgaana Jaad.