

MEMBER UPDATE

AUPE commemorates the first Truth and Reconciliation Day

September 30 is about building justice for Indigenous Peoples

For the first time ever, September 30 is a federal holiday: Truth and Reconciliation Day.

It's been a long time coming. The federal government instituted this day as a paid holiday on August 3, as a day of reflection on Canada's relationship with the Indigenous peoples of this land. Employees of the federal government will have September 30 as a holiday. The government of Alberta has not yet committed to instituting Truth and Reconciliation Day as a holiday for provincial workers, and AUPE's Human Rights Committee (HRC) and Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee (IDEC) say it must do so.

It is more than a question of a holiday. This country was founded on the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Canadian history, from first contact to the present, is littered with atrocities committed against the first peoples of the land. From so-called "residential schools," the deliberate suppression of languages and customs, to land theft and the extermination of prairie bison and Inuit sled dogs, this country's history is a crime scene.

As a country, we are finally beginning to face that reality—to accept the truth that Indigenous people have always known. The work of reconciliation, on the other hand, has yet to firmly take hold.

AUPE's IDEC and HRC wish to commemorate Truth and Reconciliation Day by reflecting on this history and the unfinished work of building a just society. We extend our solidarity, as workers from many cultures and backgrounds, to the Indigenous peoples of this land. We stand with Indigenous peoples in their fight for justice. Within our union and beyond,

Indigenous peoples deserves a future where colonizers listen to their voices and work to right historic wrongs.

We demand that, as a step on the long road to reconciliation, the government of Alberta institute September 30 as a paid holiday—as a day of reflection on Canada's past, present, and future relationship with Indigenous peoples.

As a union, we commit to challenging anti-Indigenous racism wherever we find it—from the workplace to legislation to the streets of our cities and towns. Reconciliation is a task for all of us, and labour unions have an important role to play.

We encourage all AUPE members and staff to commemorate Truth and Reconciliation Day as a day of reflection—reflecting both on the historic injustices faced by Indigenous peoples, and on the ways that we can begin a process of true reconciliation. Any member seeking to do so can read "A Knock on the Door," a book which details the history of residential schools in Canada and summarizes the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We encourage members and staff to learn the history of the land they live and work on—from the treaties that cover these territories, to the names of the Indigenous nations who have been its stewards. We know that we, as a labour union, can learn much from Indigenous resistance, resilience, diversity and vibrancy.

Our union is for all working people, regardless of background. We aim to create an organization where workers can achieve equality and struggle together, shoulder to shoulder, to build justice. And in this country, building justice for anyone is impossible without justice for Indigenous peoples.