

## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY 2021

### June 21<sup>st</sup> is National Indigenous Peoples Day

Every year we encourage all members to honour this day with deference and solidarity. This year, given the recent discovery of a mass grave of 215 Indigenous children found at a former Kamloops residential school, we must also honour our revived outrage at the ongoing violence of colonialism.

### We Will No Longer be Silenced

The attached artwork for June 21 was created by Tristan Jenni, an Indigenous artist working out of Edmonton. She works to raise awareness about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. To learn more about her work, go to [tristenjenniart.com/](http://tristenjenniart.com/).

In keeping with the message of the CUPW Indigenous Working Group, this year's themes are:

### Strong Indigenous and Resilient Indigenous – Stand up for Truth and Reconciliation

The Canadian government is only now implementing the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, having been one of just four countries to oppose it when it was developed in 2007. This says a lot. Mere declarations and apologies do not conceal the ongoing travesty surrounding land theft, dispossession and appropriation. Settler society was built upon ongoing generational trauma, which the United Nations refers to as a genocide.

### No More lost children – No More Missing and Murdered Women and Girls

Traditionally, many first peoples' societies were matriarchal – women had a different and better-respected role than under the patriarchy brought to these lands by Europeans. Settler patriarchy led to horrible injustices that continue. Forced sterilization was imposed on Indigenous women.

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Today, Indigenous women are disproportionately represented in the prison system. When Indigenous people defend their land and water, one tactic – as we saw in Oka and other places – is to attack the grandmothers and elders first in order to provoke a response and thus rationalize violent repression.

## **Intergenerational Trauma- The pain of the Residential School continues**

The injustices that many think are in the past are not over.

Most of us can say that our grandmothers have never been arrested or murdered and our children have not been kidnapped. For generations, and continuing today, children have been taken from their communities by the state. Repression is not a thing of the past. The so-called Children's Aid Society (CAS) holds more Indigenous children in custody today than ever before. In the past, many of these children were sold off to white settlers from all over North America. Indigenous women and girls disappear at an alarming rate in a way that would not be tolerated if the same were happening to settler society.



Recently the police exonerated themselves of the killing of Chantel Moore, a young Indigenous woman whom police shot during a “wellness check”. A traditional lobster fishery was violently attacked by settlers last year on the east coast, though, unlike settler colonial practices, Indigenous societies are fully capable of managing fish stocks and ensuring a sustainable relationship.

On June 21, please practice respect, honesty, and humility. Though we risk re-traumatizing those impacted by talking about it, all settlers have benefited either directly or indirectly from attempts to erase the history of colonial violence. It is up to us to ensure that reconciliation and de-colonization proceed from discussion to meaningful action so that one day we can truly stand together with the original peoples of this land. Let us not remain silent as more children are abducted, more women disappear and the land continues to be unsustainably poisoned for profit.

In solidarity,

Dave Bleakney  
2<sup>nd</sup> National Vice-President

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