



National
Aboriginal
Day

Journée
nationale des
Autochtones

June 21...

is National Aboriginal Day, a time for all Canadians to recognize the diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.



CELEBRATING ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Aboriginal peoples are the descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (First Nations), Inuit and Métis. Although these groups share many similarities, they each have their own distinct heritage, language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

National Aboriginal Day is a chance for Canadians to celebrate the rich contributions Aboriginal peoples have made to Canada. In co-operation with national Aboriginal organizations, the Government of Canada chose June 21 for National Aboriginal Day because it is also the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. For generations, many Aboriginal peoples have celebrated their culture and heritage on or near this day. Today, Canada is proud to recognize the unique achievements of Aboriginal peoples — in fields as diverse as agriculture and the environment to nation-building and the arts — with a national day of celebration. **National Aboriginal Day is for all Canadians — so share in the celebration!**

A Brief History of National Aboriginal Day

- ◆ In 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) launched a national campaign to have June 21 recognized as National Aboriginal Solidarity Day.
- ◆ In 1990, the Quebec legislature recognized June 21 as a day to celebrate Aboriginal culture.
- ◆ In 1995, participants of the Sacred Assembly in Hull, Quebec — a national meeting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people — also called for a national day to recognize the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada.
- ◆ On June 13, 1996, former Governor General Roméo LeBlanc officially declared June 21 National Aboriginal Day.

How to Get Involved

National Aboriginal Day events are organized locally and regionally. Planning committees usually include both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and many of the events are supported by a wide range of organizations. You can get involved by contacting an Aboriginal community or organization in your area, calling your local municipal office or writing to your Member of Parliament.

For more information about National Aboriginal Day, visit the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development website: www.inac.gc.ca.

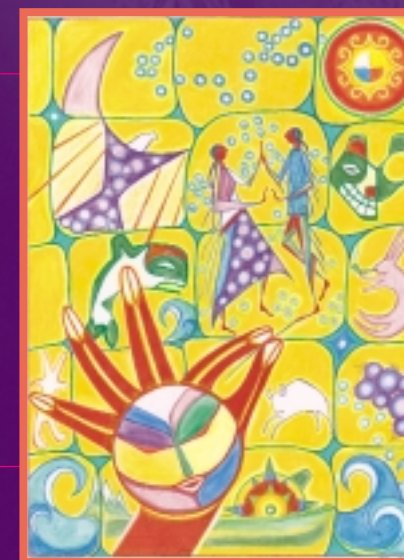
CELEBRATING FIRST NATIONS

"On National Aboriginal Day, I remember the strength, fortitude and endurance of my Mi'kmaq ancestors that have sustained me and brought me to this day. On this day, I think about our colourful history and our unique culture, and I join with others to celebrate the contributions of all Aboriginal people that help to make Canada a great country."

MARIE ROSS,
MILLBROOK FIRST NATION,
TRURO, NOVA SCOTIA

"National Aboriginal Day is a day to remember our past leaders — their hard work and their legacy for self-determination left to us to carry on. It also represents the work we are doing today, especially the integration of our cultural practices with present-day issues and maintaining our relationships with other Canadians. Lastly, it represents our vision of our Nations for the future, to set a path for the benefit of our future generations as our forefathers did for us."

HARRY NICE JR., GITWINKSIHLKW
NISGAA VILLAGE GOVERNMENT,
GITWINKSIHLKW, BRITISH COLUMBIA



Celebrating on Corn Beads by Christine Sioui Wawanoloath is the winning artwork under the *Celebrating First Nations* category of the National Aboriginal Day Poster Competition.

Christine was born in Wendake, Quebec in 1952. After graduating from Manitou College, where she studied history and art, she became involved with various organizations devoted to the social well-being of the Aboriginal community. Christine is an artist with a passion for social work and a deep concern for the health of her people.

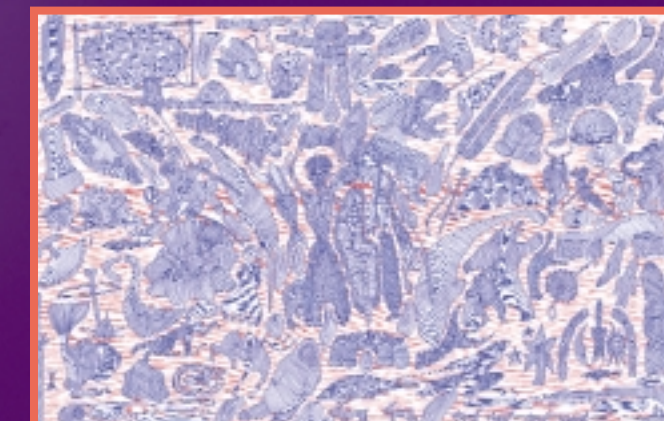
CELEBRATING INUIT

"National Aboriginal Day is the perfect date to gather, feast and celebrate the season and to participate in life. It is the longest day of the year, live it up! The recognition of this day means that, throughout June 21, my thoughts can be with thousands of others who also remember that it is Aboriginal Day!"

KATHERINE GOFTON,
PANGNIRTUNG, NUNAVUT

"As an Inuk, June 21st is a very significant annual event for me. The contribution to the continuous development of Canada by Aboriginal peoples and particularly by the Inuit, in their respective home territories, regions and communities, is recognized through the designation of June 21st as National Aboriginal Day."

SIMEONIE KUNNUK,
IGLOOLIK, NUNAVUT



Tugurlaaq by Ramus Avingaq is the winning artwork under the *Celebrating Inuit* category of the National Aboriginal Day Poster Competition.

Ramus was born in 1977 and has lived in Igloolik all his life. His entry, *Tugurlaaq*, illustrates the story of a powerful female shaman. Ramus prefers to express himself through drawings, but has also been carving since he was seven years old. As an artist, he is close to his roots, and cites his mother as an important influence on his work.

CELEBRATING MÉTIS

"National Aboriginal Day means showing off our proud culture and heritage to all people in Canada, to help them understand that indeed we are one nation, a people, a culture."

PAULINE HUPPIE,
BONNYVILLE, ALBERTA

"In my view, the importance of National Aboriginal Day can be summarized in two words: cultural awareness. Every year on June 21, Aboriginal peoples have the opportunity to share and rejoice in their achievements, not only with one another but also with every segment of Canadian society. In essence, this is the most successful means of breaking down barriers and fostering cross-cultural respect and appreciation."

JEANNINE RITCHOT,
MARQUETTE, MANITOBA

"National Aboriginal Day is a celebration — a celebration of our past and our present, but also the future. It reminds us to respect the wisdom and teachings of our Elders, encourage our young people and, most importantly, to never forget who we are and where our grass roots came from."

LUTE CALDER,
FORT FRANCES, ONTARIO

Taking Time to Remember by David Hannan is the winning artwork under the *Celebrating Métis* category of the National Aboriginal Day Poster Competition.

David was born in Ottawa in 1971 and was encouraged by his grandmother to express his creativity at an early age. He is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and currently resides in Toronto, where he works with children as an art educator. David's art reflects issues arising from his Métis heritage.

