



Indigenous support workers, youth and family workers, library assistants share powerful experiences

Tuesday’s call with Indigenous support workers, youth and family workers, library support staff and other direct student support classifications was powerful both because of the generous sharing of personal stories and in terms of the unique challenges these members face.

Members identified and discussed their bargaining priorities as well as other important concerns.

Library assistants noted that the pandemic has brought a feeling of disconnection, as the number of students in libraries is now limited and digital systems are being used to place holds on books, etc.

The work of Indigenous support workers (ISWs) and youth and family workers relies on relationships of trust with students and their families, and for ISWs, the Indigenous community as well.

These members work closely with families to support a wide variety of needs. COVID-19 has seriously undermined their ability to communicate, provide service, and support students and their families.

Additional pandemic challenges for this group include:

- lack of private space to meet and talk with students because all space in schools is now used for distancing
- it’s not possible to do cultural programs because of pandemic protocols (e.g., no smudging ceremonies)
- many Indigenous students are afraid to be in schools because they have safety concerns about physical distancing and not wearing masks

- when students have to isolate for two weeks, they often do not come back to school
- some Indigenous students do not have access to technology so online learning is not an option
- many students live in close quarters with multiple generations, so families are not willing to risk sending students to school
- ISWs face intense pressure to get Indigenous students back to school, but many parents no longer answer their phone, text messages or email because they are tired of being asked to do so

A poll question about driving students or members of their family opened a fulsome discussion about ISWs using personal vehicles (and cell phones) to do their work. Districts use a variety of systems to meet student transportation needs from purchasing bus tickets for students to covering mileage costs incurred by workers.

Participants were joined on the call by K-12 Presidents Council executive members, local presidents and CUPE National staff.

K-12 and early learning members are encouraged to take part in this exciting opportunity to hear from others who do the same or similar work, and to share information and priorities.

The next call on Thursday, May 6 is scheduled for IT tech support, technicians and other similar classifications.

REGISTER HERE:

Members are welcome to register for any of these upcoming calls any time on the actual day before the call starts.

May 6 5:30 – 7:30 pm [**IT, Tech Support, Technicians, and similar classifications**](#)

May 11 5:30 – 7:30 pm [**Labourers, Grounds and Maintenance**](#)

May 13 5:30 – 7:30 pm [**Meal Program Staff & Supervisors, including noon hour, Crossing Guards & others**](#)

May 17 5:30 – 7:30 pm [**Strong Start, ECEs, and similar classifications**](#)

May 18 5:30 – 7:30 pm [**Trades**](#)

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