



Secrétariat  
de l'Assemblée des  
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du Québec  
et du Labrador

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PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AN IMPORTANT DELEGATION OF THE FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AT THE UN  
QUEBEC IS INVITED TO SUPPORT THE  
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**Quebec, April 16, 2008** - Following the adoption by the Canadian Parliament of a motion supporting the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Chief of the Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), Ghislain Picard, reiterates his request to Quebec's National Assembly. "The recognition of the Declaration by the House of Commons testifies to the legitimacy and the pertinence of this tool in the Canadian system. Therefore, there is no longer any reason for the National Assembly, to not adopt a motion of support and to commit to respect it", stated Ghislain Picard.

The motion of support to the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by a majority of MPs of the House of Commons, on April 8. The Members of Parliament of the Conservative party were the only ones who voted against the motion. While denouncing the attitude of Stephen Harper's party on the issue of the vote, the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador welcome the gesture of the Parliament, which constitutes an important step towards the recognition of their fundamental rights.

It should be noted that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by a strong majority vote, on September 13, 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly, after more than twenty years of negotiations. One hundred forty-three countries had then voted in favor of the Declaration, 11 had abstained and only 4, including Canada, had voted against. Since that vote, the AFNQL has requested on many occasions, from the elected officials of the National Assembly, to adopt a motion of support to this Declaration, which is recognized as the tool ratifying the "minimal standards required for the survival, the dignity and the well-being of Indigenous Peoples of the world". "Quebec cannot hide behind the federal, since it exercises a great number of authorities which are directly concerned by the Declaration, such as land management and the exploitation of natural resources", stated Chief Picard.

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

An important delegation of the First Nations of Quebec will participate in the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which will be held in New York, from April 21 to May 2. Under the leadership of the Chief of the Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), Ghislain Picard, this delegation will take this opportunity to denounce the colonialist attitude of the Canadian government, and particularly its refusal to support the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“The Canadian government has unveiled the extent of its discriminatory and paternalistic policy towards the First Nations, by refusing to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, stated Ghislain Picard.

The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador wish to remind the government of Canada, that, in spite of the fact that it voted against the Declaration, the rights which are contained therein, still apply both in this country as well as anywhere else.

In October 2007, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, had expressed profound disappointment and surprise that a country like Canada voted against the Declaration considering that it likes to be viewed abroad as an example of tolerance and diversity.

“The Canadian government must hasten to respect the vote of the House of Commons and adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The government must also take the appropriate measures to put an end to its discriminatory policies and laws, which jeopardize the right of the First Nations to self-determination”, proclaims Chief Picard.

#### **In regards to the Permanent Forum**

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was created by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2000, whose goals are to provide advice to the United Nations on Indigenous issues, and to raise public awareness on these issues. It comprises 16 independent experts who sit in a personal capacity.

#### **In regards to the AFNQL**

The Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador is the regional organization which represents the Chiefs of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador. Those who will be participating to this delegation are, Grand Chief Lucien Wabanonik (Tribal Council of the Anishinabeg Algonquin Nation), Grand Chief Éva Ottawa (*Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw*), Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho (*Conseil des Innus de Ekuanitshit*) as well as several professionals of the AFNQL, of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission, of the First Nations Education Council, of the Economic Development Commission, and of the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec.

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