



Secrétariat
de l'Assemblée des
Premières Nations
du Québec
et du Labrador

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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THE FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AT THE UN
« COLONIALISM IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE IN CANADA »
- GHISLAIN PICARD**

New York City, April 30 2008 – « I see that after 500 years, colonialism is still very much alive in Canada », stated today, the Chief of the Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), at the UN. Speaking at the 7th session of the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, at UN Headquarters in New York, Chief Picard strongly denounced the attitude of the Canadian government, in particular its refusal to support the International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In fact, Chief Picard proposed that the next session of the Permanent Forum addresses specifically the implementation of the Declaration, adopted by a vast majority of members of the General Assembly of the UN. « In spite of the laws, in spite of the existence of our ancestral rights, the reality is that the governments continue to alienate our territories and to deny or, extinguish without hesitation, our rights and our titles. This colonial context is present in the laws, in the policies and before the courts. This has to stop », stated Ghislain Picard, by adding: « Indigenous peoples have rights. It is high time to have them recognized and respected. »

Aside from Ghislain Picard, Grand Chief Éva Ottawa of the Council of the Atikamekw Nation, Grand Chief Lucien Wabanonik of the Tribal Council of the Anishinabeg Algonquin Nation, and Chief Jean-Charles-Piétacho of the Council of the Innus of Ekuanitshit were among the speakers. These Chiefs also underlined the colonial context of the Canadian system towards the First Nations, denouncing among other things, the provisions of the Indian Act and other tools of discrimination. They also insisted on the responsibility of Quebec and denounced the attitude of the Quebec government, particularly towards the management of lands and natural resources, which is conducted without taking into account the ancestral rights of the First Nations. « The recovery of control of our affairs is an essential condition to ensure a future for our youth. A true partnership with the states is paramount for the management of national resources, an honorable solution. There is a need to obtain the required means: territories, resources and self-determination », stated Chief Piétacho.

This particularly productive day of the First Nations of Quebec at the UN will conclude with the presentation of the documentary « The Invisible Nation », produced and distributed by the National Film Board of Canada. Filmmaker Richard Desjardins will do us the honor of his presence.

About the Permanent Forum

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was created by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2000, with a mandate to provide expert advice on Indigenous issues to the United Nations system and to raise public awareness about these issues. It is comprised of 16 independent experts sitting in their personal capacity.

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador is the regional organization of the Chiefs of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador.

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