



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

Secretariat of the
Assembly of the
First Nations
of Quebec
and Labrador

250, Place Chef Michel Laveau, suite 201, Wendake, QC G0A 4V0
Tél. : (418) 842-5020 / 842-5274 FAX: 842-2660

PRESS RELEASE
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**GREAT SUCCESS FOR QUEBEC FIRST NATIONS' DELEGATION AT THE UN
"CANADA HAS LOST ALL CREDIBILITY"
- GHISLAIN PICARD**

New York, May 2, 2008 – At the end of the 7th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), Ghislain Picard, gives it top marks. He says he is extremely satisfied of the outcome resulting from the participation of an important delegation of Quebec First Nations representatives. “By increasing our interventions and meetings, we have been able to give a clear picture of First Nations’ situation in Canada. Today, the Canadian Government has lost all credibility in this respect on the international scene”, Chief Picard declared.

Even a whirlwind visit of the Minister of Indian Affairs, Chuck Strahl, did not help the Conservative government convince international media, and even less other delegations to the UN, of its goodwill. “It is obvious that after 500 years, colonialism is still alive and thriving in Canada”, stated the Chief of the AFNQL to the UN. Chief Picard harshly criticized the Canadian government’s attitude, especially its refusal to support the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Ghislain Picard also proposed that the next session of the Permanent Forum deal with the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which a strong majority of the members of the United Nations General Assembly adopted, but the government of Canada voted against. “Indigenous peoples have rights. It is high time they are recognized and complied with.”

Apart from Ghislain Picard, Grand Chief Éva Ottawa (Conseil de la Nation atikamekw), Grand Chief Lucien Wabanonik (Tribal Council of the Anishinabeg

Algonquin Nation) and Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho (Conseil des Innus de Ekuanitshit) also appeared before this UN Forum. These Chiefs put the emphasis on the colonial context of the Canadian system towards First Nations, denouncing in particular the provisions of the Indian Act and other tools permitting discrimination. They also insisted on Quebec's responsibility and denounced the attitude of the Quebec government, especially with regard to land management and exploitation of natural resources, which are carried out without taking First Nations' Aboriginal rights into account. "Taking back control of our affairs is a critical factor in ensuring a future for our youth. We must establish a real partnership with the states regarding the management of natural resources, an honourable solution. We must obtain the means needed: territories, resources and self-determination" asserted Chief Piétacho.

Le peuple invisible

One of the highlights of the week was undoubtedly the screening of "Le peuple invisible", a documentary produced and distributed by the NFB. Over a hundred people, including the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, and several members of the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum, attended this special screening. Filmmaker Richard Desjardins also attended the screening and answered questions from the audience.

In regards to the Permanent Forum

The Social and Economic Council (ECOSOC) created the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in July 2000. Its goals are to provide advice to the United Nations on Indigenous issues and raise public awareness on said issues. It is made up of 16 independent experts who sit on it in a personal capacity.

In regards to the AFNQL

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

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Contact: Alain Garon, Information and Communications Officer
AFNQL
Tel. (418) 842-5020
Cell.: (418) 956-5720