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

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PRESS RELEASE
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Out with Colonialism and the Indian Act

Montreal, September 13, 2008 – The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) is marking the 1st anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by participating in the *Together for Aboriginal Rights!* demonstration being held in the streets of Montreal today.

“It is important to seize the opportunity this anniversary offers to expose the Canadian government’s refusal to support this international recognition of our fundamental rights,” stresses Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

The AFNQL wishes to announce it will take active part in the next federal election campaign without giving its support to any of the parties. It has already sent letters clearly reiterating First Nations issues to all political parties and their leaders.

“First Nations will be very vocal in warning all political parties that the status quo is no longer acceptable and that Canada’s next government will have to undertake an in-depth review of its Aboriginal policy, especially regarding the *Indian Act* and its regime, which is more than ever totally unacceptable. We are entitled to ask questions to party leaders and demand clear and committed answers on their part,” adds Chief Picard.

First Nations have taken the first steps on the path towards their ineluctable political, financial and legal autonomy. Because they have had it with a colonial system that still endures 500 years after first contact with the Europeans, First Nations, having never surrendered their rights over their lands or access to their resources, are gradually regaining control over their own destiny. In spite of governments’ opposition and objections from a lot of people, First Nations are working hard at implementing their inherent right to self-government, which, incidentally, has been recognized for over 10 years.

The action of First Nations’ governments must extend far beyond the findings. We have solutions, concrete actions to propose and path-breaking means to carry them out that are all quite realistic and down-to-earth:

- Recognizing First Nations’ governments;
- Entering into territorial, fiscal and financial agreements based on a government-to-government relationship;
- Replacing the *Indian Act* with a First Nation Charter.

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