



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
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Rights of Indigenous Peoples: The United Nations Declaration
Must be Endorsed by the Governments**

Montreal, May 15, 2009 – The Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) reiterates its invitation to the governments of Quebec and Canada to endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This invitation is extended within the scope of the release of a joint open letter of the AFNQL, the CSN, the Quebec Native Women, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, Amnesty International, FIQ, Fédération des femmes du Québec, CCMM, Chantier de l'économie sociale and the Ligue des droits et des libertés. "It is urgent to respect and to implement the Declaration so that human rights are made fully accessible to the Aboriginal Peoples of Quebec" emphasizes the open letter.

Significant Support from the Civil Society

The significant support from the civil society strongly encourages the AFNQL to pursue its initiatives with the governments. The representatives of the First Nations are not only supported by Quebec's important human rights groups, but also by singer Richard Desjardins, by world-renown jurist and former United Nations High-Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, and by Me Jean-Paul Lacasse, lawyer and distinguished professor at the University of Ottawa, who specializes in Aboriginal Law. "In unison, we ask the governments to take their responsibilities and sign the Declaration", stated Ghislain Picard, the Chief of the AFNQL. On several occasions and without success, the latter invited the parliamentarians of the National Assembly to support the Declaration and to distance themselves from Ottawa's humiliating position.

Adopted at the UN in 2007 by a crushing majority, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples remains ignored by three stubborn States: Canada, the United States and New Zealand. According to the President of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, "the countries (that signed) have reconciled with their painful past

and have decided to pursue their march towards the future on the path of human rights”. Australia, which in the past was part of this resistant group, decided to join the Declaration this past winter. There are numerous rumors about the endorsement of the Declaration by the United States and New Zealand, which could isolate Canada in a very shameful way on the international scene.

The AFNQL at the UN

Ghislain Picard took advantage of today’s press conference to emphasize that, next week the AFNQL will be embarking on a very important diplomatic mission at the UN. This mission comprises the promotion of the First Nations’ Sovereignty and the signature of the First Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the organization of a side event and meetings with numerous Indigenous organizations from various regions of the world.

Several First Nations Chiefs will be in attendance at the UN and four side events are to be organized. The AFNQL, the Quebec Native Women, the First Nations Education Council and the Conseil des Innus de Pessamit will be presenting the following events:

- Monday, May 18: The analysis of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as seen by Indigenous women
- Monday, May 18: Self-determination of the Peoples of Nitassinan
- Wednesday, May 20: Our distinct identity – Our Institutions: an inalienable right
- Thursday, May 21: Our Lands, Our Rights: the political, legal and territorial rights of the First Nations of Quebec
- Friday, May 22: AFNQL will be meeting with Professor James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people.

-30-

SOURCE : Alain Garon
Communications Officer,
AFNQL
418 842-5020 or 418-956-5720