



PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ

For immediate release

CANADA'S ASSIMILATION POLICY DENOUNCED AT THE UNO

New York, May 20, 2009 – In front of the representatives of Aboriginal peoples throughout the World, the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) and the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), Ghislain Picard, have demonstrated that the policy of assimilation is still very present in Canada. “There is an urgent need to develop criteria allowing the identification and denunciation of different forms of assimilation existing in numerous countries, including Canada,” declared Chief Ghislain Picard in the scope of a side event held by the FNEC on the occasion of the 8th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in New York.

Lise Bastien, Director General of the FNEC, has also made the clear demonstration that the Canadian government is deliberately maintaining the First Nations education system in a situation of under-funding, thus imposing “the integration” of First Nations students into the provincial education system, and in the same stride ensuring the assimilation of Native peoples into the dominant society.

“The strategies of assimilation, hidden behind speeches of good will, have to be severely denounced and condemned on the international scene; it’s a question of survival for our peoples,” stated Chief Picard, highlighting the necessity of implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This statement echoed his earlier intervention today during the regular session of the Permanent Forum.

The AFNQL will also hold a side event tomorrow (May 21), under the theme “Our Lands, Our Rights” in the scope of the Permanent Forum.

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