



Secrétariat
de l'Assemblée des
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du Québec
et du Labrador

Secretariat of the
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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**AFNQL AND SEVERAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS
URGE CANADA TO ENDORSE THE DECLARATION
UNCONDITIONALLY**

Kahnawake, April 23, 2010 – Yesterday, during the 9th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Ghislain Picard, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), intervened, on behalf of the AFNQL, AFN and other human rights organizations, to welcome Canada's first steps toward the endorsement of the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples. This joint statement he read from stated: "we request the government to instantly adopt this vital human rights instrument without qualifications".

To this effect, during the dialog between the North American States and Indigenous groups, Chief Picard added that "the Declaration sets out minimum standards with respect to rights that the States must respect. The government must ensure that the laws of Canada, including the Indian Act, comply with the Declaration and not vice versa". On April 20, a Canadian representative declared that the government would endorse the Declaration, as per the Speech from the Throne on March 3, that is to say "in full respect of the Constitution and the laws of Canada".

The declaration was endorsed by a majority vote of 143 countries at the UN General Assembly in September 2007. Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia were the only four to vote against. Since then, the governments of Australia and New Zealand have changed their position in favour of the Declaration. The Obama Administration also announced it is reconsidering the issue.

At the UN, Chief Picard took advantage of his presence at the UN to meet with other Indigenous world leaders as well as various organizations advocating for human rights and the rights of Indigenous peoples. "This one full day has allowed us to meet with our international contacts and demonstrate that First Nations are closely watching over the federal government," said Chief Picard.

About the Forum

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2000 to provide advice on Indigenous

concerns to the United Nations system and to raise public awareness of their issues. It is comprised of 16 independent experts who serve in their personal capacity.

About AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador is the regional organization that brings together the 43 Chiefs of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador.

Chief Picard will be available for interviews from April 23.

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