



British Columbia All Chiefs' Task Force

Media Release

BC All Chiefs' Task Force calls on Canadians to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Coast Salish Territory, February 22, 2010: The BC All Chiefs' Task Force has launched a campaign challenging the Federal Government to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Canadians are being asked to forward a letter expressing their concern about Canada's refusal to sign the Declaration.

The UNDRIP intends to recognize the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples including fundamental human rights for First Nations such as inherent rights to traditional lands and territories, self-determination, and unqualified recognition of First Nations peoples, cultures, languages, and identities. However, Canada is one of only four nations to have voted against the Declaration. Overwhelming support was demonstrated with 143 states voting in favour of the declaration. Australia has since decided to support the UNDRIP, and the United States and New Zealand are currently reviewing their position. Canada's House of Commons passed a motion on April 8, 2008 endorsing the UN DRIP and calling upon Parliament and the Government of Canada to "fully implement the standards contained therein;" however, the Harper Government has refused to sign on.

"The UNDRIP outlines the internationally adopted minimal standards of human rights of Indigenous Peoples which will support strong First Nations governments, economies, families and communities, and ultimately benefit all Canadians. The Declaration is a statement of the principles that should guide our relationship. It provides a way to measure our progress. It is time that we all embrace the Declaration and act on its principles," says Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo.

"By adopting the UNDRIP Canada will affirm the basic standards required for the survival, dignity, and well-being of First Nation peoples. We encourage all Canadian's, who are viewed internationally as the defender of human rights, to speak out about the Canadian Government not adopting the UNDRIP," says Chief Wayne Christian, spokesperson for the B.C. All Chiefs' Task Force."

"The cost for Canada to not support the Declaration will be highlighted in First Nations poverty, further missing women, education disparities, and continued land and resource disputes. It makes resounding sense for Canada to adopt the UNDRIP—it supports strong Nations and vibrant families and communities which will benefit First Nations and non-First Nations alike," says **Beverley Clifton Percival**, Chair, BC All Chiefs' Task Force.

The following is an open letter *is an open letter to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper:*

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

I am deeply concerned about Canada's refusal to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



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The Government of Canada, as a human rights leader and signatory to other international human rights instruments, has a responsibility to set a global example in the recognition and respect of Indigenous people living in Canada. Not only is Canada's refusal to sign the declaration a refusal to recognize the rights of Aboriginal people living in Canada but sets a bad example for developing countries that look to Canada as a leader in Human Rights affairs.

To date, Canada remains one of the only countries refusing to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Since the adoption of the declaration by 143 states on September 13th, 2007, three out of the four countries that refused to sign on have since reversed or are reviewing their decision. Canada has remained the sole country refusing to change their stance.

To this end, I urge you to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

An electronic copy of the letter can be found at <http://firstnationstaskforce.wordpress.com/> and a full copy of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can be found on the site.

The All Chief's Task Force has embarked on a province-wide letter writing and post card campaign and encourages other organizations to do the same. This week postcards will be delivered to over 5,000 homes in the Vancouver area, including the B.C Premier's home riding asking residents to contact the Prime Minister's office and encourage him to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Post Cards can be downloaded at <http://firstnationstaskforce.wordpress.com/>.

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About the British Columbia All Chiefs' Task Force

In August 2009, a First Nations Task Force composed of volunteer First Nation leaders from across the province, was established by First Nations to raise awareness and recognition of Aboriginal title and rights at the provincial, national and international levels, as well as with the general public. Find additional information and news about the All Chiefs' Task Force at: <http://firstnationstaskforce.wordpress.com>

For media inquiries, please contact:

Chief Wayne Christian, Chair,
BC All Chiefs' Coordinated Action Working Group
Spokesperson Shuswap Nation Tribal Council
Telephone: (250) 503-7072

Beverley Clifton Percival, Chair, BC All Chiefs' Task Force
Negotiator, Gitksan Hereditary Chiefs
Telephone: (250) 842-6780 local 370

Mr. Cliff Atleo,
President, Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
Telephone: (250) 720-5336

Ms. Kathryn Teneese,
Chair, Ktunaxa Nation Council
Telephone: (250) 489-8696

Mr. Robert Morales
Chief Negotiator, Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group
Telephone: (250) 710-2241