

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



“The 13th of September 2007 will be remembered as a day when the United Nations and its Member States, together with Indigenous peoples, reconciled with past painful histories and decided to march into the future on the path of human rights.” – Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, on the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly.

Canada’s shame

The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007 after more than two decades of debate and negotiation. The *Declaration* makes a unique and much needed contribution to global human rights protection through its emphasis on rights that are essential to the survival and well-being of Indigenous peoples, such as land rights and the right of self-determination.

The *Declaration* was adopted by a overwhelming vote of 144 to 4. Canada, which had championed the *Declaration* during the final years of the drafting process, joined with the United States, Australia and New Zealand to oppose its adoption. The Canadian government has since argued that the *Declaration* should not apply to countries that voted against it. This is the first time that Canada has claimed to be exempt from a universal human rights standard.

Canada must take a principled stand for human rights

We, the undersigned, urge all Members of Parliament and Senators to help restore Canadian leadership in support of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by publicly committing to upholding and promoting the *Declaration*.

We call on the government of Canada to engage in a constructive dialogue with Indigenous peoples on effective implementation measures, including how to use the *UN Declaration* in developing and revising current policy and law.

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Amnesty International Canada, 312 Laurier Avenue E., Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9

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