



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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United Nations Day: A Time for Canada to Reflect

Coast Salish Traditional Territory/West Vancouver, BC - The 62nd anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter on October 24, 1945 is a time to celebrate the many achievements of the United Nations. Yet, today it is also a time to reflect upon the image that Canada is projecting to the world.

This week, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, expressed concern that many Canadians cling to an “unduly romantic vision” of Canada’s role on the international stage.

This vision of Canada’s high stature on the world stage has been shattered in recent times by Canada’s aggressive campaign against the rights of Indigenous Peoples, amongst other things.

On September 13, 2007, Canada was one of only four countries to vote against the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (“Declaration”) in the UN General Assembly. It was the only member of the UN Human Rights Council to do so. The Declaration was, however, supported by 144 countries.

As Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit’s political executive, states, “This action truly marked a black day for Canada, which previously had an international reputation for advocating and promoting human rights. On the day the world’s Indigenous Peoples needed Canada’s advocacy the most, it turned its back on us.

“Canada’s opposition to the Declaration seriously undermines the important work of the Human Rights Council, and so its membership on that body is untenable. Rightfully, it should resign its membership of the Human Rights Council immediately,” added Chief John.

Canada has been criticised throughout the United Nations system for its persistent denial of Indigenous rights. Earlier this year, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“CERD”) sternly criticised Canada and its provinces

for their “strongly adversarial positions” which forces Indigenous Peoples into expensive litigation to defend their rights.

Furthermore, CERD has expressed grave concern that Canada’s strategy of “modifying” constitutionally recognised and affirmed Aboriginal rights and title (for instance, as pursued by the Crown in treaty negotiations in British Columbia) was simply a new form of extinguishing Aboriginal rights.

“On United Nations Day, Canada needs to seriously reflect on how its repeated denial of Indigenous rights is affecting its international reputation,” said Chief John.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in the treaty negotiation process in British Columbia as well as on other issues of common concern. Further information on the Summit can be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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