

# First Nations Summit

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **First Nations Summit Commends Federal Liberal Government for decision to become a “full supporter” of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, BC** – Leaders of the First Nations Summit are commending the federal Liberal government for announcing that Canada will officially remove its permanent objector status and become a “full unqualified supporter” of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration). The announcement to adopt and implement the Declaration was made by Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada at the 15th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) at United Nations headquarters in New York. The Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada was also in attendance yesterday and offered encouraging remarks on the importance of the Declaration.

“Today’s announcement, which overturns Canada’s offensive and ill willed opposition to the Declaration, has been a long time coming as it has been nearly nine years since the 2007 adoption by the United Nations General Assembly. It is a departure from the previous government’s actions and an important step in the path of reconciliation in this country”, said Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit Political Executive and a North American Representative to the UNPFII, who is also attending the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNPFII.

“Indigenous peoples in Canada have been extremely frustrated by Canada’s lack of substantive recognition of this valuable human rights instrument. Now that Canada officially supports the Declaration, necessary steps must be taken, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, to ensure its full implementation. Now the hard work of harmonizing Canada’s laws, regulations, policies and decisions impacting indigenous peoples in this country to ensure they are in line with the requirements outlined in the 46 Articles of the Declaration begins”, concluded Grand Chief John.

The Declaration affirms the “minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world” as well as rights of self-determination and requires that governments obtain free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples in decisions about lands and resource development on their lands. It was overwhelmingly supported by the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 2007, with 144 States voting in favour of adoption. Unfortunately, it took more than three years for the Declaration to be “officially endorsed” by Canada (November 2010). Since then, Canada had maintained a dismissive position on the Declaration by indicating that such international instruments bear little impact on the day to day decisions of government. Canada’s revised status as a full supporter of the Declaration is scheduled to take effect on May 10, 2016. The full text of the Declaration can be found at: [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf).

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*The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca).*

