



## **UN Review of Canada's Human Rights Record Shows They Are Not Up To Task**

**Geneva, Switzerland (June 9, 2009)** – Indigenous Peoples and representative organizations are deeply disappointed by the Government of Canada's response to an important review of Canada's human rights record being carried out by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

As part of the new Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, UN member states made a wide range of recommendations to Canada in February. Canada's response, which was publicly released on June 5<sup>th</sup>, is to be delivered in Geneva today.

“As a member and early supporter of the UN Human Rights Council, one would have expected that Canada would have made every effort to make sure its own engagement with the Universal Periodic Review process sets a positive example for other states,” says Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Wilton Littlechild, “Instead, Canada has done its best to avoid making any real commitment for improving human rights on the ground.”

In its response, Canada has rejected 28 of the 68 recommendations. Almost half of the rejected recommendations directly affect Indigenous Peoples, including the call by numerous UN member states for Canada to rethink its opposition to the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Even where Canada has not rejected the recommendations of the Periodic Review, it has largely failed to commit to concrete action. In most instances, Canada's report simply reiterates existing programs and services, rather than committing to new, concrete actions required to fix the problem.

For example, on the issue of violence against Indigenous women, which Canada's report acknowledges “is a pressing concern for Canada,” the government states that it “accepts the underlying principles” behind the UPR recommendations but ignores their specific content.

These recommendations include instituting “comprehensive reporting and statistical analysis of the scale and character of violence against indigenous women” and initiating a national strategy” in consultation with indigenous representatives, to respond to the severity of the issues.”

President Beverley Jacobs of the Native Women’s Association of Canada states, “We know as well as other States around the world what actions Canada must take to improve the lives of Indigenous women – we hope that Canada will take this chance to show the global community that they will take the necessary steps to improve their human rights record for Indigenous women.”

Canada’s refusal to recognize the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* is another area of concern in this UPR review. Despite the many calls for Canada to endorse and implement this international human rights instrument, Canada has rejected this recommendation. As noted by Regional Chief Wilton Littlechild, “Canada has made a commitment at this UN review ‘to promote and protect human rights through evolving international human rights standards.’ This must include recognition of the *UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* if Canada is to have any credibility as a human rights leader.”

The Review concludes today in Geneva. Canada will be reviewed again in four years. The Native Women’s Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations are calling on Canada to use the next four years to work closely with Indigenous Peoples in Canada in order to make concrete improvements in the protection of their human rights.

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.

The Native Women’s Association of Canada is an aggregate of 13 native women’s organizations and is the national voice of Aboriginal women in Canada.

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