

Say Yes! To Indigenous Rights

"All prayers are heard by the same God"

Campaign Statements:

Mission, Purpose, Goals, Key Facts and Noteworthy Reference Points

Mission: About the "Say Yes! To Indigenous Rights" campaign

In prayer, beginning at noon on June 21st, we will honour and celebrate the rights of Canadians and First Peoples to protect and defend their and their children's future well-being. Without judgement or condemnation, we are praying that our people will set aside anger and selfish interests and come together as one mind and one heart on good terms and begin to act as "we" as opposed to "I."

Our prayer circles focus on finding ways to ensure that Canada wholeheartedly, without conditions or limitations, endorses the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Realizing that at this time, Australia, New Zealand and the United States have also failed to wholeheartedly adopt the UNDRIP, we extend our prayers to ask that all under the United Nations come together as one in peace, friendship, dignity and respect for First Peoples.

Canadians and First Peoples are to be celebrated and blessed; both hold the need to protect and honour their communities, faith and traditions. With prayer and dialogue considering their common interests, Canadians and First Peoples can decide the best ways to live together in peace and friendship.

The common theme identified for the prayers are to address current difficulties regarding unanimous adoption of the UNDRIP by the member countries of the United Nations. Dissenting parties should be named in prayer without judgement or condemnation, seeking only the guidance of Creator-God to help them to join the 145 other countries on good terms. Prayers should also be offered for the work of official mediators and for peacemakers and observers who place themselves in the way of oppression, aggressive or violent confrontation.

Purpose of the "Say Yes!" campaign

1. Raise public awareness on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).
2. Inform the public about the U.N. Declaration and how it is positively affecting countries that have adopted and have begun its implementation.
3. Educate the public on the rights of indigenous people in comparison and in contrast to existing problems under Canada's Indian Act and Indian Affairs department regulations.
4. Raise public awareness on the UNDRIP to the level of their awareness of Canada's peacekeeping role.

Goals

1. Persuade and convince the four non-signatory countries, beginning with Canada, (then U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand) to support and sign the U.N. Declaration.
2. Persuade governments and the general public to endorse and utilize the U.N. Declaration as a legitimate, legal, useful and important international instrument.
3. Persuade governments to incorporate and adopt the principles contained in the U.N. Declaration.
4. Persuade Indigenous governments and Indigenous people to enhance the legitimacy of the U.N. Declaration by framing our issues in terms of the U.N. Declaration's rights and freedoms in political and legal initiatives.
5. To form alliances with concerned and caring individuals, groups and organizations to use the endorsement of the U.N. Declaration in our work toward our common human concerns and goals.

Key Facts

Over 22 years in the making, the UNDRIP was referred to the UN General Assembly by a Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights and adopted by the Assembly on September 13, 2007.

The Declaration sets out the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples including identity, culture, language, education, health care and employment. Its effective implementation would result in significant improvements in the global situation of indigenous peoples.

The Declaration is a principled legal framework and comprehensive international instrument to affirm and address existing injustices against indigenous people.

Although 145 countries have already become signatories, Canada, Australia, the United States and New Zealand, four countries with large non-indigenous populations and small remnant indigenous populations, have yet to endorse the Declaration without limitations. Human Rights Declarations become universally applicable upon their adoption by the UN General Assembly, regardless of how individual states vote.

Noteworthy reference points - Canada

Canada presently has glaring blemishes against its international reputation in its treatment of indigenous people:

1. The Sandra Lovelace v. Canada case of 1977 - 1981 involving the treatment of Indigenous women. After the case was presented at the United Nations, Canada was instructed to change the Indian Act to stop discriminating against Indigenous women by taking away their rights if they married non-status men.

2. Canada voted against the U.N. Declaration, making it one of four countries to do so, against the agreement of 145 nations that have endorsed the declaration to date (as of May 5, 2010). The March 2010 Throne Speech stated that Canada "... will take steps to endorse this aspirational document in a manner fully consistent with Canada's Constitution and laws" contrary to the U.N. Resolution.

3. "I plead guilty, I'm a racist." -- Jason Kenney, Canada's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, October 23, 2009

4. The Sharon McIvor case: McIvor is a grandmother involved in court action to ensure that her grandchildren and their children be entitled to status in Canada's Indian Act. The Province of British Columbia Court of Appeal ordered the Federal Government to Introduce new legislation to address the ongoing discrimination against Indigenous women and their children in 2009.

5. Among Canadians, First Peoples have the:

highest rates of infant mortality, diabetes, tuberculosis, HIV infections, overcrowded housing, substandard housing, unemployment, suicide, mortality

and the

lowest rates of quality of life, high school graduations, and federal services.

Links

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"your politics are your spirituality, demonstrated." I believe that with all my heart and soul. I think that politics is one place where we get the power to do in our collective civil life what our spirituality calls upon us to do.