



## PUBLIC STATEMENT

13 September 2023

### **The human rights of Indigenous Peoples must be respected and upheld by all sectors and at all levels of Canadian society**

*Statement of the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the 16<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

Sixteen years after the adoption of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)*, much more needs to be done to bring these vital human rights standards to life.

In 2021, Canada became one of the first countries in the world to pass national legislation with the goal of fully implementing the *UN Declaration*. As highlighted by the tabling of Canada's first implementation [plan this June](#), the federal government must now take robust measures to ensure its laws, regulations, policies and programmes live up to its legal commitments.

The provincial government of British Columbia adopted its own legislated framework for implementation of the *UN Declaration* and, on March 30, 2022, released an action plan outlining 89 specific commitments.

In March 2023, the Government of the Northwest Territories introduced Bill 85, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act*, which provides a framework for implementation of the *UN Declaration* at the territorial level.

All levels of governments have a necessary role to play in realizing the rights affirmed in the *UN Declaration*. The Coalition urges all provinces and territories to follow the example of the federal government and the governments of British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

At the same time, the responsibility to respect and uphold the *UN Declaration* does not stop with government. All sectors of society must play their part.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called the *UN Declaration* “the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.”

The *UN Declaration* sets out a global minimum standard necessary to end and to heal the centuries of violent racism and discrimination that have been perpetuated against Indigenous Peoples, in Canada and globally.

The adoption of the *UN Declaration* by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007, was a crucial victory in the evolution of international human rights law. This historic achievement was possible because Indigenous Peoples worked for more than two decades to advance and build



global consensus around a strong and powerful vision of self-determination, decolonization, and anti-racism.

The Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples calls on all public institutions, civil society organizations, and private corporations to work with Indigenous Peoples to implement the *UN Declaration* within their areas of responsibility and influence.

Schools and universities must include the *UN Declaration* in any lessons or courses about understanding human rights protections in Canada.

Hospitals and other healthcare facilities must ensure that nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals have the training necessary to uphold the minimum standards of the *UN Declaration* in all interactions with Indigenous patients.

Civil society organizations should be working cooperatively with Indigenous Peoples to develop joint advocacy strategies to promote public awareness of the human rights affirmed in the *UN Declaration*.

Corporations must work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to implement effective due diligence policies to ensure their operations are consistent with the rights protected in the *UN Declaration*.

*The Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

**Statement endorsed by:**

- Amnistie Internationale Canada Francophone
- British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
- British Columbia Treaty Commission
- Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)
- Cheryl Knockwood, Chair, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission
- First Nations Summit
- Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government
- Hup-Wil-Lax-A, Kirby Muldoe, Grassroots Human Rights Defender
- Indigenous World Association
- Katsi'tsakwas, Ellen Gabriel
- KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
- Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie
- Musqueam First Nation
- Naomi W. Metallic, Chancellor's Chair in Aboriginal Law and Policy, Associate Professor, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University
- Professor Sheryl Lightfoot, University of British Columbia
- Tl'azt'en Nation
- Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs