

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2007
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

**UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FINALLY
ADOPTED AFTER 25 YEARS!**

Indigenous Representatives from the North American Region share the following statement with the world community:

We bring you respectful greetings from our Leaders, Elders, men, women and children of all the Indigenous Peoples of North America.

It is a great day when Indigenous Peoples can be counted among all the other Peoples on Mother Earth. Today at the United Nations, States have finally recognized what we have always known – We are Peoples, equal in all ways to all other Peoples, with inherent and inalienable rights to our survival, our way of life, lands and self-determination.

We, Indigenous Peoples of this land, are part of Creation, in the homelands we inherited from our ancestors. We understand from our original teachings that we are meant to live in harmony with all Creation and with other Peoples, including with those who came to our homelands seeking a better life for themselves and their children. Our Nations entered into sacred Treaties with them. Sadly, these treaties have been violated time and time again. The tragic and brutal story of what happened to us, especially at the hands of the governments, is well known.

But today, with the adoption of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by the United Nations General Assembly, we see the opportunity for a new beginning, for another kind of relationship with States in North America and indeed throughout the world.

We celebrate that the fundamental human rights which we have all worked so hard to uphold in this Declaration are still intact in the final text now adopted by the UN General Assembly. These include inherent rights related to our traditional lands, territories and natural resources, our self-determination, our unqualified recognition as Peoples, our own cultures, languages and identities, our subsistence, our own concepts of developments, Treaties, and free, prior and informed consent.

We recognize with gratitude everyone who contributed to this 25 years effort, who dedicated themselves over many long years to bring us to this day. Many of those from our own Indigenous Nations of North America who were central to the development of this Declaration, are no longer with us in this world. We honor and recognize those great ones in particular today.

Many Indigenous Peoples, including those who supported the modified Declaration, expressed profound concerns with the process that created final changes to the text, for

example, those related to a lower standard applicable to military activities. This process was completed without the direct participation of Indigenous Peoples.

We once again express our appreciation for the UN Human Rights Council which took the historic and courageous step to adopt the Declaration in its first session in June 2006. Indigenous Peoples will never forget this action by the Human Rights Council. We look forward to immediately undertaking the implementation of the rights affirmed in the Declaration, hand in hand with states and UN bodies, in particular the UN Human Rights Council. We count on strong state and UN support in this regard.

We express our profound appreciation to the many states which voted in support of the Declaration today. We take note and call the attention of the world to those who have opposed it. We call on them to re-consider their position in the near future and take the Declaration to heart.

In closing, we affirm that this is an historic day for Indigenous Peoples in the international community, and indeed for humanity as a whole. We hope, and dedicate ourselves to working for our vision that it will be carried out by Indigenous Peoples and states in good faith, with good will and with integrity, so that Indigenous communities and Peoples of North America and around the world will be able to experience real benefits. The survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples requires nothing less. We remain committed to lifting the spirits of our peoples according to the teachings of our ancestors for the benefit of all members of our communities and for the future generations.

All our relations.

For more information:

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