

Speaking Notes

For

**The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs**

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
16th Session**

**Intervention from the Floor on the 10th Anniversary of the
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous
Peoples**

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Distinguished guests and colleagues.

I am honoured to be here on the traditional territory of the Lenape people – and all Indigenous people who have walked these lands - to speak about Canada’s steps to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild, a past North American Representative of this Forum, uses the sweetgrass metaphor.

When braided together, the individual strands are stronger.

In Canada we have 3 distinct pathways to reconciliation and self-determination.

- **The Declaration.**
- **Honouring our treaties, claims, and other agreements and working towards new recognition of rights.**
- **And the 94 specific and meaningful calls to action that arose from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.**

These 3 processes are like three strands of a sweetgrass braid.

Pour reprendre les propos du grand chef, ces trois aspects commencent à être bien entrelacés.

In direct response to the Declaration, The Prime Minister has mandated the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to Chair a working group to review all federal laws and policies related to Indigenous peoples -- to reverse the colonial and paternalistic approaches. We will make the changes necessary in order to ensure that our laws reflect Canada's Constitutional obligations, align with the UN Declaration and are meeting our commitment to implement all 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This is about breathing life in Section 35 of Canada's Constitution – which formally entrenches the rights of Indigenous people in Canadian law – and yet, for far too long, has not been lived up to.

The Prime Minister has made clear no relationship is more important than that with Indigenous people and it must be based upon recognition of rights, respect and co-operation.

Le Canada tient également des réunions annuelles entre le premier ministre et les Premières Nations, les Inuits et la Nation métisse afin d'établir leurs priorités concernant les travaux conjoints.

We are tracking publicly the progress on the 94 Calls to Action. We can show Action on 49 of those in which the federal government has a direct responsibility.

In responding to the first 5 Calls to Action we are working with Provinces and Territories to overhaul child and family service for indigenous children -- to reduce the unacceptable number of children in care and assure they grow up with a secure personal and cultural identity which is essential to their wellbeing and success.

We have launched an historic national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls which will deal with root causes including racism and sexism in policing.

Nous considérons que le retour de la voix et du pouvoir des femmes autochtones constitue une mesure importante de décolonisation.

The Prime Minister also committed to legislation to protect, revitalize and promote indigenous languages and that essential work has begun.

Last year, I commented that implementing UNDRIP shouldn't be scary.

The Declaration's principles of free, prior and informed consent are being built into reforms of the reviewing processes for environmental assessment.

We have developed new, more flexible paths to recognition of rights and jurisdiction and self-determination and new fiscal relationships.

We have much more work to do together, there are centuries of wrongs to right, but these interlinked efforts are merging, like the braided sweetgrass, to take our country forward in a good way strengthened by the recognition of the rights of indigenous people.

Thank you.