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STATEMENT SUPPORTED BY THE:  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
CHIEFS OF ONTARIO  
INDIGENOUS WORLD ASSOCIATION  
FEDERATION OF SASKATCHEWAN INDIAN  
NATIONS

THE CHIEF OF THE ASSEMBLY OF  
THE FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC  
AND LABRADOR

**URGES**

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TO

**RESPECT**

THE UNITED NATIONS  
DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS  
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

*Chief Guislain PIRARD*



JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE FIRST  
NATIONS EDUCATION COUNCIL AND  
THE ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST NATIONS OF  
QUEBEC AND LABRADOR

*United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Twelfth Session - New York, 20-31 May 2013*

Education is the instrument through which cultures perpetuate themselves. The destiny of a people is intricately bound to the way its children are educated. Education is the transmission of cultural DNA from one generation to the next.

True self-determination by Indigenous peoples requires that Indigenous peoples control their own education. First Nations must control First Nations education in a manner appropriate to their culture and language, as recognized by the Declaration.

The Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador provides support to all First Nations in Quebec and Labrador. On March 27, 2013, chiefs from Quebec and Labrador submitted to senior federal government officials documents indicating their opposition to any federal legislative initiative regarding First Nations including initiatives regarding education undertaken without First Nations' free, prior, and informed consent.

The First Nations Education Council aims to ensure the provision of quality, holistic education to the First Nations in Quebec through complete jurisdictional autonomy for First Nations. New legislation proposed by Canada, entitled the First Nation Education Act, would make the achievement of this goal increasingly difficult.

The parameters of the proposed First Nation Education Act are set out in the Discussion Guide issued by the Government of Canada. The proposed measures would empower Canada to set the standard for First Nations education, would grant Canada the last word on how First Nations schools are to be governed, and would delegate control over curriculum for First Nations education to the provinces while providing no guarantees ensuring First Nations schools receive the funding required to deliver high quality and culturally relevant education.

The Government of Canada issued a budget speech in March 2013 declaring that they will continue to develop education legislation despite the clear statement made on October 3, 2012 at a Special Assembly on Education convened by the Assembly of First Nations (Canada) whereby chiefs from across Canada rejected any federal legislative initiative that did not take into account First Nations' priorities, decision-making, or jurisdiction.

There is nothing in the Discussion Guide, or in subsequent communication from federal representatives ensuring that First Nations youth receive an education in their language and culture.

If the legislation is developed as proposed and adopted, formal education in Canada may once again become a tool for undermining Indigenous peoples' culture and identity – a tool of forced integration.

**In paragraph 92 of the report on its ninth session, the Permanent Forum urged Canada to work in good faith with Indigenous peoples for the unqualified endorsement and full implementation of the Declaration in a manner that honours the Declaration's spirit and intent and Indigenous peoples' rights. By its actions, and specifically by the way that it unilaterally implements federal legislation to the detriment of Indigenous peoples' rights and interests, Canada has shown that it has failed to heed this call.**

We recommend the following measures to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as a means to ensure the respect of the Declaration at the national level:

1. Declare that no state, including Canada, should adopt any legislation affecting Indigenous peoples without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Indigenous peoples affected;
2. Urge all states, including Canada, to agree with Indigenous peoples on a process by which legislation affecting their rights and interests is to be developed before such legislation is developed or proposed;
3. Dissuade all states, including Canada, from adopting any legislation regarding Indigenous peoples' education without the explicit protection of Indigenous peoples' jurisdiction over their own education and their right to receive an education appropriate to their languages and cultures;
4. Urge Canada to work in good faith with Indigenous peoples for the unqualified endorsement and full implementation of the Declaration in a manner that honours the Declaration's spirit and intent and Indigenous peoples' rights.

We also hope that those present at this Forum become aware of a document that the Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and the First Nations Education Council jointly presented in an event held in parallel to the eighth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2009. This document is entitled *The urgent need for criteria helping to identify and denounce different forms of forced integration*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Document available on the websites: [www.apnql-afnql.com](http://www.apnql-afnql.com)  
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