



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.  
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

**PRESS RELEASE**  
For immediate release

### **60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

**Kahnawake, December 10, 2008** – Today marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Quebec Native Women rejoices with the rest of the international community in the creation of this important document for the peoples of this world. And while it is a time of celebration it is also a day that reminds us that further work needs to be done to uphold the very spirit and principles represented in the Declaration of Human Rights.

These principles lives strongly in the hearts and minds of all those who believe in the equality of human rights, but sadly, there are still States who fail to defend rights contained in this Declaration.

Violence against Indigenous women is a human rights' violation in which many states including Canada have failed in their obligation not only to protect, but also to provide equal access to human rights. The continued sexual discrimination legislated within the Indian Act has led to the devaluation of Indigenous women whose roles as caregivers and holders of Indigenous knowledge have been constantly undermined.

In discussions regarding human rights, Indigenous peoples' rights are often overlooked and ignored. State imposed legislation such as the Indian Act weakens Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, but, as well, denies Indigenous peoples the ability to promote, protect and perpetuate their own languages, customs and forms of governance. As stated in the Declaration, all peoples have a right to a nationality and to protect their heritage. In its refusal to support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Canada has demonstrated once again that it has an agenda of perpetuating colonization and to not recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples to their lands and territories.

Thus, in spite of the June 11<sup>th</sup> apology on Residential Schools, Canada continues its practice of colonization through the Indian Act. We therefore call upon the Canadian Government to begin more efficient treaty making bodies that will protect the rights of Indigenous peoples to their lands and territories. Canada must also sign the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and enlist all levels of society to support and protect the most marginalized people of this society: Indigenous women.

We call upon Canada to develop a national action plan to combat all levels of violence in society and to ensure that the promotion of non-violence becomes a standard norm in educational institutions, in legislation, and most certainly in its dealings with Aboriginal peoples' communities and organizations.

In Peace,

**Ellen Gabriel**  
President

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