



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.  
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

PRESS RELEASE  
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## **Quebec Native Women deplors the condition of Aboriginal women in Canada in light of UN review of Human Rights**

Kahnawake, January 19, 2009 – As Canada comes up for a UN review on human rights on February 3, Quebec Native Women has made an assessment of the condition of Aboriginal peoples in Quebec and Canada and has established that a great deal of work remains to be done to advance the issue of human rights. Aboriginal women in Canada must face discrimination and poverty at a higher rate than any other group of people(s) and still very few measures have been taken by the federal government to find solutions to the challenges that Aboriginal women are facing. On January 5, Canada presented its report before the UN Human Rights Council for the *Universal Periodic Review* (UPR), without any mention to the fundamental principles established in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in 2007. The UN Declaration is an international human rights instrument that was supported by a motion in Parliament in April 2008, but still remains to be fully implemented by the Canadian government.

“If Canada continues to purport to the International community that it is defender of human rights, than it must without delay, support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, stated QNW president Ellen Gabriel, adding that “the marginalization of Indigenous peoples by Canada, in particular the continued discrimination of Indigenous women by the Indian Act is an indication of the lack of good will and the perpetuation of the colonial mind set of Canada. Jurisdictional arguments by provinces and the federal government insidiously infringe upon the human rights of Indigenous peoples, our livelihood, culture and language”. In efforts to inform the international community of this situation, QNW united with other Aboriginal and non-governmental organizations in presenting a joint submission to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2008. Regrettably, Canada does not mention the Declaration in its report to the UPR, which clearly demonstrates its lack of will to collaborate with Aboriginal peoples.

In effect, NGOs and UN agencies have repeatedly reported on the reality of Aboriginal people in Canada with respect to the high rate of violence against women, overall discrimination, increasing poverty and lack of housing. “It is deplorable that in a First world country like Canada that children, in particular Indigenous children, must live in poverty and lack access to adequate housing”, continues Ms. Gabriel. In its concluding observations on Canada, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women requested that the government investigate the over 500 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women in this country. Statistics have demonstrated that Aboriginal women in Canada are five times more likely to die from violence than Canadian women of other origins. According to a Statistics Canada report “Overall, 21% of Aboriginal people reported being victims of spousal violence in 2004, three times higher than for non-Aboriginal people (7%)”.



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QNW will be participating in the consultation organized by the *Ministère des relations internationales* on the issues related to human rights that will be discussed during the UPR, which will take place on January 20 in Montreal. During this meeting, QNW will present this assessment of the current situation of Aboriginal women in Quebec and Canada and will urge the government to uphold its human rights obligations.

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