



***FIRST NATIONS CALL ON ALL CANADIANS TO
STAND WITH US ON JUNE 29TH, 2007***

***Issued at Gatineau, Quebec
May 23, 2007***

The Assembly of First Nations calls on First Nations, Canadian citizens and corporations, to stand together to insist that the Government of Canada respond to the crisis in First Nations communities.

Since Confederation in 1867, First Nations have been subject to repeated attempts by the Government of Canada to forcibly assimilate us and erase our identities. Still, we survive today as distinct peoples.

It is time for action.

First Nations have put forward a reasonable plan that provides for reconciliation and begins to close the gaps between First Nations and Canadians. Working in collaboration, this plan will contribute to a more productive, prosperous and harmonious Canada.

First Nations call on the Parliament of Canada to adopt the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and to respect the decision by the UN Human Rights Council that the *Declaration* establishes the essential standards for respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

First Nations call on the Government of Canada to respond in a manner that respects First Nations jurisdiction and responsibility over our lands and our peoples, and our right to govern ourselves as Nations, including:

1. Reconciliation of First Nations rights with the Federal Crown through the recognition and implementation of First Nations governments;
2. Investment in the development and implementation of First Nation governments by removing the current cap on core funding, allocation of funds as agreed to at the First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal Issues (2005), and to establish a new formula for sustainable funding transfers based on population and inflation; and,
3. Implementation of structural changes including policy renewal to expedite resolution of First Nations land rights and Treaty implementation.

ADDENDUM

First Nations are the original inhabitants of this land, who helped the newcomers survive and build the country called Canada.

Since before 1867, the engines of assimilation have included federal policies, programs, laws and legislation. The most painful manifestation is the residential schools era, which plagues us to this day through its lasting and devastating cultural, social and economic impacts.

First Nations poverty is the single greatest social injustice facing Canada. Canada is one of the wealthiest nations, all because of the generosity and land of our ancestors. Yet First Nations endure poverty and third world conditions in their own homeland.

This injustice is met with silence. The unacceptable is accepted.

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs admits it knows that First Nations face serious funding shortfalls because of a decade-long cap that has frozen funding growth at only two percent a year. This is causing serious health and safety risks to our families and children. Yet the Government of Canada fails to fix this fiscal discrimination.

First Nations poverty is creating crisis and conflict. First Nations are denied basic rights like access to safe drinking water. First Nations suffer from chronic housing shortages and overcrowding, see their children apprehended and placed in child welfare at alarming rates, and grieve as their youth kill themselves in epidemic proportions. These statistics are well-known, yet the Government fails to respond decisively with a real plan for action.

Instead, the Government of Canada fuels frustration by taking a unilateral, piecemeal and scattered approach which lacks vision and ignores fundamental issues. The Government is not engaging meaningfully with First Nations, is not listening to its own recommendations and solutions as agreed to by First Nations and the Government in documents like the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), the agreement reached at the First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal Issues and the AFN-Crown Political Accord for the Recognition and Implementation of First Nation Governments(2005).

The Government of Canada opposes Aboriginal rights internationally and domestically. The Government is working to defeat passage of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirms Indigenous peoples' collective right to self determination. The Government is undermining collective rights in Canada by trying to force First Nations to adopt legislation that prioritizes individual rights at the expense of collective rights. The Government is actively denying First Nations the processes, resources and timelines required to foster First Nations solutions.

First Nations assert the right to full and effective enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms - both collective and individual - including the right to self determination, without hindrance or adverse discrimination, as recognized in international law and in section 35 of Canada's own Constitution Act, 1982. First Nations assert their right to land, life and justice.

The Government of Canada is morally and legally obligated to undertake processes of reconciliation and to properly resource the rebuilding of our sacred languages, culture and history. This includes atonement for past wrongs and collaborative work to navigate the way forward.