

User Guide: Impacts of Contact

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)

What

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) was passed by the General Assembly in 2007. This document is a summary of a much larger document.

Why

“We are at a turning point in our history where we need to return to the real meaning of our nationhood and identities. We must stand proud and together, strengthened in unity, for our traditions, our laws, our lands and our territories. We must work together to ensure healthy families and communities; to achieve sustainable economies; and to return to living in balance with our environment. This is our time to use education as our tool to retain and maintain the strength of First Nations languages, history, teachings and values while facilitating better understanding between First Nations and the rest of Canadian society. This is our time to empower our fast growing youth population in ways that will ensure a future of opportunity, success and prosperity. The voices of our youth must be heard, understood and included.”

*National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo,
Assembly of First Nations*

It is important that everybody know that over centuries indigenous peoples have been marginalized. Their lands have been seized, their rights have been trampled on, their culture and language have been exterminated. Considered less valuable, the rights of Indigenous peoples have been violated all over the world.

The UN Declaration is a powerful, informative, concise document that opens the door to discussing issues that affect Indigenous People globally—diversity, human rights, and justice. It allows students to understand

differences, injustices, and basic standards of well-being that should be universal for all human beings. While not legally binding, the UN Declaration establishes a set of universal standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of the world's 370 million Indigenous peoples. Canada's unqualified endorsement of the UN Declaration in May, 2016 was a historic commitment to abide by and respect those standards.

How

- There are 370 million Indigenous peoples in the world. What characteristics and qualities do Indigenous People have in common? What are the differences?
- Why is it so important for Indigenous peoples that the right to culture, identity, language, employment, and education be protected?
- How does the UN Declaration help promote respect and recognition of differences?
- How were Indigenous Peoples treated historically? In Canada? Elsewhere?
- What has changed in the treatment of, and attitudes to, Indigenous Peoples? In Canada? Elsewhere?
- Why does a discussion about Indigenous peoples lead inevitably to a discussion about diversity and human rights?
- How do the rights in the UN Declaration relate to individuals or groups?
- What does it mean that Canada has adopted this Declaration? There are many ways that the UN Declaration can be implemented in Canada and locally. For example, the UN Declaration can be used as the basis for reviewing and reforming laws and policies to be compliant with the rights of Indigenous peoples. Courts and human rights tribunals can use the UN Declaration as a relevant and persuasive source for interpreting Indigenous human rights and related state obligations. Corporations and investors should abide by the standards and ensure that their human rights policies and business practices are in line with UN Declaration values.
- Why did Canada adopt the agreement in 2010 with qualifications? Why is the 2016 adoption more meaningful?