



INUIT

Inuit Circumpolar Leader Applauds Canada's Movement towards Full Recognition of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

For immediate release

Inuvik – 15 November 2010 – Duane Smith, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Canada and ICC Vice Chair says that Canada's cautious approach towards recognition of the UN Declaration is somewhat disappointing, but that it still needs to be applauded.

Duane Smith said, "the Government of Canada deserves some credit for admitting that they may have jumped the gun on opposing the Declaration at the time of the vote. They say today that they have listened to the indigenous peoples who have helped draft the document, and that they have learned."

ICC leaders spent 24 years alongside UN member states, negotiating, drafting, and compromising before the Declaration was finally passed by the UN General Assembly in 2007. Throughout the decades-long drafting process, Canadian governments of all political stripes supported the text, "essentially as it stands today", added Mr. Smith, "so it was a disappointment when the current government rejected it". It is in this context that the ICC Canada leader says the mitigated support given to the Declaration on Friday is a great step forward. But he cautions, "it was a step that they took after 3 years of listening, a step that we hope turns into a full commitment, hopefully after more constructive dialogue between us."

The Inuit leader said that, for him, the only real problem with Canada's new position is that they are afraid to let the Canadian constitution and laws be subject to an evaluation through the lens of the Declaration. "Canada is saying that we have a legal framework that is protective of indigenous peoples, and so we should now let the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples be a true test of that framework", Mr. Smith said. He concluded, "now that Canada has made this important commitment, we will make sure the Declaration's intent is fulfilled here in Canada and elsewhere. We are ready to work together with Canada to make this happen."

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