



PRESS RELEASE

UN COMMITTEE CONDEMNS CANADA FOR CONTINUING TO VIOLATE INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS

(August 30, 2017) On August 25, 2017, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) condemned Canada for its ongoing violation of Indigenous land rights. In [a report](#) on Canada's periodic review, CERD echoed Indigenous Nations who made submissions to the committee on the racism and rights violations they experience as a result of more than 150 years of colonial policy and law in Canada.

The CERD report outlines concluding observations from the periodic review of Canada's compliance with the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. Canada's periodic review took place on August 14th and 15th in Geneva.

There was large participation from Indigenous Nations who travelled to Geneva to appear before CERD during Canada's periodic review. This included a coalition of Indigenous title and rights holders, including leadership from the Interior of British Columbia, working together with Cree, Athapaskan, Anishinaabe, and three Algonquin First Nations. This coalition put forward a strong analysis of how Canada's laws and policies are still rooted in colonialism, submitting joint recommendations to CERD to ensure that Indigenous peoples are full decision-makers regarding their lands and resources. Core points from these joint recommendations were reflected in CERD's report, making it clear that Indigenous peoples should be recognized as decision-makers, and that their free, prior and informed consent is required for all matters concerning their land rights.

CERD has previously rejected Canada's policies, such as the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy (CCP) and the British Columbia Treaty Commission (BCTC) process. CERD specifically asked Canada about these policies in a letter from the early warning and urgent action subcommittee in October, 2016. Meanwhile, the CCP, BCTC and the Algonquins of Ontario process continue to be the prevailing frameworks for negotiating the de facto extinguishment of Indigenous land rights in British Columbia, Ontario and Canada.

CERD's new report on Canada's periodic review goes further to acknowledge Indigenous Nations as decision-makers on their territories. It condemns "Costly, time consuming and ineffective litigation" as the "only remedy in place of seeking free, prior and informed consent, resulting in the State party continuing to issue permits which allow for damage to lands." In this light, the report specifically recommends that Canada suspend all permits and approvals for the construction of the Site C dam in northeastern British Columbia.

The participation of Indigenous Nations at CERD was the culmination of several months of activities to protest Canada "celebrating" 150 years of colonization of Indigenous territories. These activities were inspired by Arthur Manuel, an Indigenous leader who passed away in January 2017, known globally for his tireless advocacy of Indigenous self-determination. Manuel, who had been active at the UN for decades, had called on Indigenous Nations and Peoples to use Canada's 150th anniversary to tell Canadians and the world that the time had come to decolonize Canada.

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The **Concluding Observations on the Twenty-first to Twenty-third Periodic Reports of Canada**, by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on August 25, 2017 is available to download here:

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fCAN%2fCO%2f21-23&Lang=en

Or you can view the report via Dropbox here:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/7qkilctcf93ngq/CERD_C_CAN_CO_21-23_28714_E.docx?dl=0