

SEPTEMBER, 2007



## → CUC IN ACTION →

Current Social Responsibility Letters, Events, Topics & Discussion

### ~ LETTERS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ~

#### CUC URGES CANADA TO VOTE FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS DECLARATION

Monday, September 10, 2007

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable Chuck Strahl  
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear **Prime Minister Harper and Minister Strahl,**

The Canadian Unitarian Council is writing to express our concern that Canada is expected to vote against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13, 2007 at the United Nations General Assembly. Canada is one of only a few countries planning to vote against the adoption of the long awaited and much needed Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We feel the Declaration would be a major step towards eliminating the human rights violations suffered by 370 million Indigenous people worldwide.

Among the Principles affirmed by Unitarians and Universalists, several guide us in our relations with Indigenous Peoples, including our affirmations of:

- the inherent worth and dignity of every person;
  - justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
  - the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; and a respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
- As a country built on values of respect for diversity, Canada has demonstrated those same beliefs. We are called to act, both as Canadians and as Unitarians and Universalists, to encourage the government to support the Declaration.

Canada needs to be mindful of the situation of Indigenous peoples here and elsewhere who are, for the most part, nations without a country. Indigenous peoples around the world face enormous discrimination, land theft, and loss of culture. This is certainly true even in our wealthy and stable nation, a nation that has always championed human rights.

The Declaration is supported by a majority of countries around the world, as well as a majority of Canadians. It does not create any new human rights or violate any of the existing rights in which Canadians have consistently demonstrated their belief. Canada has an opportunity to strengthen and enhance its international reputation on Aboriginal issues and its proud tradition of advancing human rights and social justice by signing the Declaration.

We urge the Canadian government to support the two resolutions of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs by endorsing the Declaration as it is today.



## SR LETTER 'VOTE FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS' CONTINUED... ..

More than twenty years in the making, the result of active consultation and democratic participation by Canadians as well as those of other nations, the Declaration is, we believe, the strong international human rights instrument that Indigenous peoples need in order to address the widespread human rights violations affecting them globally.

Yours sincerely,

*Jean Pfleiderer*

Jean Pfleiderer, Ph.D.

President, Board of Trustees

Canadian Unitarian Council – conseil unitarien du Canada

Email: [jeanp@cuc.ca](mailto:jeanp@cuc.ca)

cc: KAIROS, Ed Bianchi - Program Coordinator, Aboriginal Rights

cc: Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, Bob Stevenson - President

Want in on the discussion? Join the diversity discussion group by sending a blank email to: [cuc-diversity-discussion-subscribe@yahoogleps.com](mailto:cuc-diversity-discussion-subscribe@yahoogleps.com)

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIVERSITY MONITORING GROUP:

The CUC Diversity Monitoring Group (formally, the Monitoring Group on Racial, Religious, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Justice and Equity) has been very active on a number of Indigenous issues recently. We have drafted the text of letters sent by the CUC Board supporting the National Day of Action, recognizing National Aboriginal Day, and encouraging Canada to vote in favour of the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights. Despite support for the Declaration in the Canadian population and particularly from several Aboriginal and First Nations groups, Canada once again voted against the Declaration on September 13, 2007.

The Diversity MG recognizes that the issues addressed by the Declaration and others raised by it are complex. For this reason, we are committed to be active learners about the Declaration and other action items concerning Canada's First Peoples. We sincerely believe that education not only creates conditions for change, it is change: thinking about an issue inevitably changes attitudes and actions. We

are especially interested in learning from and with others working for social justice: the Elders who advise us, like-minded organizations such as KAIROS, groups such as the Native Women's Association, and, of course, Canadian U\*Us.

As an individual, how can you help?

- Check out the materials posted by the Diversity MG on the CUC Web site: [http://www.cuc.ca/social\\_responsibility/diversity.htm](http://www.cuc.ca/social_responsibility/diversity.htm). Our recent letters are posted there to give you information about CUC's position on those three items and related issues, such as poverty.
- Learn about the positions and concerns of Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities by attending Pow-wows, meetings, and activities organized in your area. Since there is no one "Native community" speaking in one voice, find out about the positions of First Nations women and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples, as well as those involved in land claims.



## **A MESSAGE FROM THE DIVERSITY MONITORING GROUP CONTINUED....**

- Join the CUC-diversity-discussion: We'd like to open the conversation to a broad spectrum of Canadian U\*Us committed to positive change and action rooted in deep respect. The members of the Diversity Monitoring Group will be participating in these discussions, and following the posts on CUC's various e-mail lists, as part of our ongoing commitment. Share your concerns and your suggestions for action.
- Plan to attend the pre-conference workshop at the 2008 ACM: Connecting the Canadas Coast to Coast to Coast. As well as discussing Canadian identity and diversity, participants will have a chance to engage in action learning and awareness-raising activities that they can share with others.

## **WHY BUY NOTHING ON NOVEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>?**

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November 23<sup>rd</sup> is "Buy Nothing Day" – an event originated by Adbusters Magazine, and willingly adopted by people in both the US and Canada.

U\*U's might buy into this concept for any number of reasons:

We like to challenge ourselves to "walk the talk". Buying nothing for a whole 24 hours is actually a pretty big challenge. How big a challenge is determined by how strictly you define "Buy" and "Nothing". Do you turn off your electricity? Do you eat only garden produce that day? Do you walk or cycle to work instead of driving or taking a bus? Do you save all pay-per-use telephone calls until tomorrow?

We believe that we are not only a part of, but also responsible for, the Interdependent Web of All Existence. This means that we have to be conscious of how much we are consuming, how necessary it really is, and what the costs are to the earth and to all living creatures when we consume anything. A tall order. But what the heck – we like challenges!

We value the Inherent Worth and Dignity of all people. Some of those people we value are working for extremely poor wages, under unhealthy conditions, to produce inexpensive widgets that we mostly don't need. Because we don't need them, we will only buy them if they are very cheap. One way of our helping to slow down that race to ultimate cheapness might be to stop purchasing silly goods (or bads) and start putting that saved money into social justice projects instead.

We want to grow spiritually. There's nothing like a good dose of Nothing to put a person into a spiritually growthful space. It makes you aware of all the noise and stuff that fill your other 364 days. Empty yourself, it's good for you.

I'm sure that as creative as we are, collectively we could come up with many more reasons to Buy Nothing on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Go for it!

Rev. Wendy McNiven  
Consulting Minister  
UU Fellowship of Kamloops, BC



## ~ ANNOUNCEMENTS ~

### UPCOMING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY EVENTS

**From: Chris Michell ([continentalsac@gmail.com](mailto:continentalsac@gmail.com)), Continental Youth Social Action Coordinator**

This fall presents us as Unitarian Universalists with several ways to live out our values of working for a world with peace, liberty and justice for all. Issues of Peace, Poverty, Hunger, and Consumerism are highlighted with several dates and events in the next few months.

Please consider participating in any or all of the following events as individuals, families, groups and congregations:

- **September 21 – International Day of Peace (Peace Day)** <http://www.peaceday.org/home.aspx>

Work for peace in your community, and in the world on the UN's day for Peace. Hold a vigil, a forum, meditation, letter-writing campaign, or anything else to support peace in our troubled world.

For more resources/ideas: <http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org/>

- **October 8 – Interfaith Fast for Peace** <http://www.shalomctr.org/node/1269>

What better way to spend thanksgiving Monday than giving thanks for the peace we experience here in Canada, and calling for peace for the rest of the world? Join our cousins in other faiths and our American neighbours in a dawn-to-dusk fast in protest of war (particularly the War in Iraq), and in a call for peace. Gather in interfaith vigils and events, and break the fast with thanksgiving dinner held after dusk.

(If you're on Facebook.com, let us know you're attending the event, hosted by Young UU Peacemakers)

- **October 16 – World Food Day “The Right to Food”**

<http://www.oxfam.ca/what-we-do/campaigns/world-food-day>

Most of us in North America take food for granted, but many people – both in Canada, and in other countries – are not so lucky.

Hold a forum about poverty and hunger, an empty bowls meal (<http://www.emptybowls.net/>) or a hunger banquet (<http://www.hungerbanquet.org/>).

- **October 17<sup>th</sup> – Stand Up and Speak Out against poverty** <http://www.standagainstpoverty.org/>

“In 2000, world leaders from 189 countries signed up to the [Millennium Development Goals](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org) (MDGs) ([www.millenniumcampaign.org](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org)), a global plan to halve extreme poverty by 2015. Last year, more than [23 million people in 87 countries](#) stood up and took action to remind them of this promise. It was the largest single coordinated mobilization in the history of the Guinness World Records.”

-Millennium Campaign

Let's make it bigger and better this year!

- **November 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> – Buy Nothing Day**

Refuse to participate in the rampant consumerism of our culture by abstaining from buying on the biggest shopping day of the year. Hold a protest, a stuff-swap, or simply refuse to purchase anything.

**From: Bob Manson, Chair of Economic Justice Monitoring Group**

**October 14 -15** is International Week of Action Against Poverty:

- organize or take part in a Stand Up Against Poverty event on **October 16 or 17th** (Google it for more info)

- contact your local politicians and let them know that this is an important issue to you

- write a letter to the editor about poverty in your city

- help out at a local food bank or emergency shelter

**October 16th** is World Food Day:

- hold or attend an Empty Bowls Dinner

- consider having a church potluck with the "100 mile menu", i.e. locally produced items as much as possible

**November 23** - is Buy Nothing Day, which corresponds to the American Thanksgiving

\* there has been much discussion on a similar day on Boxing Day - start thinking about it

*What one does matters. Make a difference and join us as we fight for economic justice locally and globally.*

Join this discussion group by sending a blank email to:  
[cuc-economic-justice-discussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:cuc-economic-justice-discussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)