



October 28, 2019

Members of the 19<sup>th</sup> NWT Legislative Assembly,  
Government of the NWT,  
Yellowknife, NWT  
X1A 2L9

Dear NWT MLAs:

**Re: Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)**

Congratulations to you all on your election campaigns, successes with the electorate, your work to date with your MLA colleagues, and the consensus you have achieved on the priorities for the 19th Assembly. You give northerners hope that we can have a healthy democracy and social and environmental justice here in the NWT. A healthy democracy and social and environmental justice are the mandate of the Council of Canadians that guides the work of the NWT Chapter.

As you may know, the NWT Chapter of the Council of Canadians is a strong advocate for the implementation of UNDRIP and has lobbied the NWT Legislative Assembly to embed UNDRIP in post-devolution legislation. <https://cocnwt.wordpress.com/2019/02/25/chapter-calls-for-new-laws-to-honour-undrip/> Our efforts in this regard fell on deaf ears within the 18th Assembly but we see that the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly will be very different.

Back in 2008, the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories passed a motion unanimously supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons. That was easy to do, when it didn't mean doing anything. In the 18th Assembly, a spate of resource management laws were passed in the post-devolution "devolve and evolve" homecoming of our resource management law. Unfortunately, none of these laws incorporated the vital principles ensuring UNDRIP's "free, prior and informed consent". This Assembly needs to do better and fulfil its principled support of UNDRIP. It is time for this Assembly to fulfil the promise it made in 2008.

The NWT Chapter is very encouraged by your commitment to implementing UNDRIP. [https://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/priorities\\_of\\_the\\_19th\\_legislative\\_assembly.pdf](https://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/priorities_of_the_19th_legislative_assembly.pdf) We are also encouraged by recently introduced legislation in British Columbia that when passed, will require the Government of British Columbia to:

- Take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of British Columbia are consistent with UNDRIP;
- Implement action plans to achieve the objectives of UNDRIP; and
- Enable agreements with Indigenous governments for any number of reasons including exercising statutory authority <https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/legislation-debates-proceedings/41st-parliament/4th-session/bills/first-reading/gov41-1>.

We view the legislation proposed for British Columbia as a starting point for implementing UNDRIP in the NWT.

These are exciting times. With the both the GNWT and the City of Yellowknife <https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/indigenous-relations.asp> committed to UNDRIP, we are hopeful for meaningful change in Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance relationships, social and environmental justice, and the health of our democracy here in the NWT.

We will be monitoring and offering assistance as we can.

Wishing you all the best in your work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lois Little', written in a cursive style.

Lois Little,  
NWT Chapter.