

# Restore Aboriginal Rights

October 1, 2008 07:40 PM

More than a million Canadians are First Peoples. Yet the standard of living for this population lags behind the rest of Canada. Deplorable statistics on issues such as water, poverty, literacy, suicide, women's rights and the legal system show that our First Peoples are being left behind. We need a government with a clear vision for improving quality of life for Aboriginal people. But Stephen Harper refuses to address the problem, and the equality gap between First Peoples and the rest of Canada is getting worse.

## What do we want?

- A federal strategy that focuses on reconciliation, poverty reduction, and improving the standard of living for First Peoples.
- Implementation of the \$5 billion Kelowna Accord.
- Reverse the 2007 budget cuts to programs that addressed literacy, apprenticeship and the environment.
- Improve relations between the federal government and First Peoples government.
- Follow the United Nations recommendation to make access to water a human right.
- A Canadian Aboriginal economic strategy involving education, training, infrastructure development, self-government, and access to land, natural resources, capital and development.
- Clarify policy commitments on key issues facing Inuit and the Arctic, including land claims agreements and the impact of climate change.
- Sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states that native peoples have "the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties". It also prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them.

## It's time for change

- According to the United Nations' Human Development Index, the majority of Canadians enjoy one of the highest standards of living among the nations of world. Yet the quality of life for Canada's Aboriginal people ranks 63<sup>rd</sup>.
- Eighty-five Aboriginal communities have water systems that are high risk. Currently, there are close to 100 boil water advisories.
- First Peoples communities in Canada have a 5 to 7 year shorter life expectancy, 1.5 times higher infant mortality rates, 2.5 times higher suicide rates, a disproportionate burden of infectious diseases, 8 times more tuberculosis cases and 5 times more hepatitis A cases. There is no systematic approach to the health and wellness of First Peoples.