

Willow Hamilton
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Region 1

If you were a leader in a position of power, what steps would you take to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and who would you involve?

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People has been an important step towards reconciliation. However, early in its life, UNDRIP still has many weak points to be addressed. It must constantly adapt to new issues, simultaneously addressing residual affects of constitution. In a position of power, I would enforce Indigenous rights that have historically been violated, also acting against recent injustices. I still have much to learn about the subject, and the best way for this would be to involve Indigenous members of parliament. Even including Canada's past efforts and the implementation of UNDRIP, we are still far from reconciliation.

Although UNDRIP has been implemented, its efforts are often not enough to reverse systemic oppression that Indigenous peoples face. For example, UNDRIP emphasizes Indigenous citizens' rights to self-determination and government. However, until 2019, the Indian Act ruled that Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men would lose their Indigenous status. Although this ruling is no longer in place, residual misogyny and racism against Indigenous women still lingers today. To address this, I would fund resources for Indigenous women and ensure that they are given jurisdiction, especially regarding their identities. As well as this, the government historically neglects Indigenous children living on reserves, failing to provide them with family support. I would take guidance from Margo Laine Greenwood, a Canadian senator and Indigenous scholar. With expertise in early childhood care and education of Indigenous children, representatives like her could advocate for Aboriginal children. In summary, the first steps I would take would be to act against systemic discrimination that has not been directly addressed by UNDRIP.

The next steps I take would address specific, current violations against Indigenous rights. One significant case is our government's failure to provide drinking water to reserves. Decaying infrastructure of water plants leaves water undrinkable, making bottled and boiled water a primary resource. To combat this issue, I would recruit workers to improve infrastructure on reserves. Until the situation improves, I would allot government funds for shipment of bottled water and costs of heating for boiling. Taking steps to give Indigenous citizens more control over their environment and resources is a key factor in their independence. Ellis Ross, currently serving his fifth year as a member of the Legislative Assembly of BC, serves as a Critic for Energy. He has officiated and built LND plants on Haisla Nation reserves and worked for the department of fisheries and oceans. His influence and knowledge would offer control over Native land. Making sure their communities are environmentally sustainable is a way of giving Indigenous people more self-governance.

In summary, although the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People has been an important step towards equal treatment of Indigenous peoples, there is still a long way to go before reconciliation. As much as our government must address urgent, current issues, they must also work to reverse the affects of Canada's violent history. Including Indigenous voices in our government and systems will bring equality to our system.