



British Columbia All Chiefs' Task Force Fact Sheet

Aboriginal Poverty in Canada

Canada is one of the richest nations in the world, and yet the majority of Indigenous people in Canada are living in conditions found in third-world countries. This marginalization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada has too long been ignored, and actions must be taken to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people both on and off the reserve. The poverty and related poor social conditions experienced by Aboriginal communities in Canada has been officially and repeatedly recognized by the United Nations.

- ✚ Poverty is a root contributor to many of the social and economic disparities between First Nations and other Canadians and British Columbians. The percentage of Aboriginal families living at or below the low income category is 26.7% compared with 17.7% for non-Aboriginal families in British Columbia.
 - In a recent report published by the United Nations on January 14th 2010, Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis were found to live 17 years less than the average for non-Aboriginal Canadians.
 - Aboriginal children are believed to be the poorest in the country, with Inuit infant mortality rates three times more than the Canadian average¹. Aboriginal communities in Canada have a tuberculosis rate 35 times higher than non-Aboriginal Canadians, a suicide rate 11 times higher than the national average and an increase in crime resulting in 19% of all Canadian inmates being of Aboriginal descent².
 - BC has one of the highest percentages of Aboriginal peoples in core housing need at 29%, compared to 14% for the Canadian population as a whole.³
- ✚ The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples clearly outlines in article 21 that: *"Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and re-training, housing, sanitation, health, and social security."* It also outlines that *"States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities."*

First Nations take responsibility for the survival, dignity and well-being of the communities and families. First Nations leaders are prepared to work together with government to meaningfully address poverty and close the socio-economic gaps between First Nations and other British Columbians. The first step in this process is for the Government of Canada to uphold the basic human rights of First Nations in Canada through adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

¹ Canadian Medical Journal, Jan 24th 2010

² Statistics provided by the UN Permanent forum on Indigenous Issues

³ Provincial Health Officer Annual Report 2007