



# Kanata Beaverbrook Community Association

December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**An Open Letter to The Right Hon. Stephen Joseph Harper, Prime Minister of Canada and His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II**

**Re:** Expression of support for Chief Theresa Spence and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) of Canada

Dear Honorable Members and Crown Representatives,

As representatives of the communities of Kanata Lakes and Beaverbrook in Kanata North, we are writing today with concern regarding the hunger strike undertaken by Chief Theresa Spence in order to draw attention to the continued economic, social and environmental pressures First Nations communities find themselves under. The people of our community and the people of Canada share these concerns.

The communities of Kanata North, 30km west of Canada's capital, have been working for many years to protect local land with highly significant ecological and cultural value in a partially protected area called The South March Highlands. The goal of our community is to promote ecologically and socially balanced development that respects biodiversity and engages the community in a democratic and meaningful way. In the fall and winter of 2010 / 2011 our community's efforts came to a critical point. The Indigenous /Aboriginal communities of our region, in solidarity with our objectives came out and showed virtually unprecedented solidarity with our communities. Indigenous / Aboriginal leaders and representatives from surrounding communities came to our community and freely shared their time, traditions, knowledge and resources. Together, our communities fostered awareness of biodiversity and the ecological and cultural heritage of our wonderful land, and demonstrated what we can achieve by supporting each other. The many ties that were forged between our respective communities persist to this day.

What is happening in our community is a microcosm for what is happening nationally. Governments are obstructing meaningful community engagement and are pushing through misguided developments while people directly affected struggle to be heard. Recent changes to The Environmental Assessment Act, The Navigable Waters Act, Species at Risk, and now the Indian Act all serve to stack the cards against local communities, whether indigenous or non-indigenous, in favour of resource exploitation and development at any cost. Little by little checks and balances are being removed. Avenues for public debate and tools for legitimate expressions of dissent are being dismantled in order to secure unimpeded development in the name of economic security. Meanwhile, our natural heritage, which is an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Indigenous Peoples, and the cultural foundations of Canada, to which no one person or group can claim, is being sold at fire sale prices on the international market.

Nowhere is this felt as keenly as in Canada's Indigenous Communities. Bill C45 is a direct attack on Indigenous treaty rights in Canada. As signatories to The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), we have an obligation to uphold and protect the rights of Canada's Indigenous communities, who remain the most marginalized group in our society. We call upon The Government of Canada and representatives of The Crown to uphold the Honour of the Crown in its dealings with First Nations, agree to meet with all Treaty First Nations as requested by Chief Spence, listen to their concerns and act as honest brokers in alignment with Canada's UNDRIP obligations.

Canadians place great value on our lakes, rivers, forests, mountains, oceans and plains. We understand that like us, these systems are all interrelated, and this biodiversity, when protected and strengthened nourishes us now and will serve to protect us in the future. This is more than just ecological equity; it is intrinsically tied to our identity as a people who, whether newly arrived, or having been here since time immemorial, call this land home. We are strongest when we honor and respect each other, and listen to each other. Please immediately listen to the request of Chief Spence, honor and respect the voices of Canada's First Nations, communities across Canada, and all our relations.

Respectfully Yours,

**Adam Caldwell**  
VP Environment,  
Kanata Lakes Community Association

**Gary Sealey**  
President, Kanata Beaverbrook  
Community Association