

# **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the American Indian Language Development Institute's (AILDI) Resolution on Language Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly on the 13th of September 2007. In the Declaration, the General Assembly proclaims the rights of Indigenous peoples by:

*Affirming* that Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such,

*Affirming also* that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind,

*Reaffirms* that Indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind,

*Recognizing* the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic, and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources.

The Declaration contains, among others, the following:

## *Article 1*

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law.

## *Article 2*

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their Indigenous origin or identity.

## *Article 13, Section 1*

Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

Guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the participants in the 30th American Indian Language Development Institute solemnly present the following **resolution regarding language rights of Indigenous peoples:**

Whereas, our Indigenous languages are the primary means of conveyance of our unique cultural traditions; and

Whereas, there is a drastic language shift, language loss and urgency to address the dire situation in the Americas and world-wide; and

Whereas, providing language transmission opportunities is a matter of social justice; and

Whereas, in the United States, there is continued discrimination and prejudice against Native Languages aggressively expressed through English only initiatives; and

Whereas, we, members of Indigenous communities, have language rights to maintain, revitalize, and promote the use of our Native Languages in all spheres of life -- spiritual, political, social, economic and personal; and

Whereas, we have our right to choose the use of our languages within private and public spaces, such as within our families, schools and communities; and

Whereas, the uninterrupted transmission of our Native languages from one generation to the next must be respected, protected, and supported thereby to maintain, enhance and strengthen the continuation of the Indigenous peoples' traditions; and

Whereas, our Native Languages enable us to continue to build and affirm solid self-esteem and to maintain dignity as members of the Indigenous Nation and as citizens of the world; and

Whereas, the most effective way to revitalize, maintain and promote our Native Languages is by immersing ourselves in the languages of our choice at home, at school and in the communities; and

Therefore, be it resolved that we as members and supporters of sovereign Indigenous Nations reaffirm the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples to respect, protect and promote our languages and proclaim our commitment to maintain, revitalize and promote cultural and linguistic diversity of the world.

The foregoing resolution was formulated and acted upon by the participants of the 30th American Indian Language Development Institute, Tucson, Arizona on the 2nd of July, 2009.