

## **2. THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) DRAFT AMERICAN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS**

In February 1997, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights completed several years of work by approving the "Proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", which it submitted to the OAS Permanent Council in April of that year for study. The draft instrument was prepared by the Commission pursuant to a resolution of the 1989 OAS General Assembly, requesting the Commission to "prepare a declaration on the rights of the Indian peoples". Since then, Canada and other member states have submitted detailed comments and observations regarding draft provisions, most recently to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 1997 on its then existing draft, and to the Permanent Council in early 1998 (as required by the relevant resolution of the 1997 General Assembly).

A first meeting of government experts was held in February 1999 to consider the "Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations" (retitled at the 1998 General Assembly). Subsequently, with Canada taking a lead role, member states have agreed to establish a formal Working Group which will meet for the first time on November 8 to 12, 1999 in Washington.

The Draft American Declaration covers a wide range of issues, including human rights, education, religious freedom, self-government, land and resources, and environmental protection.

Canada has spoken in favour of international instruments on the rights of indigenous peoples both within the context of the OAS and at UN fora. Canada supports the development of these instruments through a process that provides for the views of indigenous groups, and considers their participation in the process to be of great importance.

Canada believes that the Draft American Declaration should: 1) reflect the unique place of indigenous peoples in the Americas; 2) be universal in application; 3) promote reconciliation and protection of indigenous rights; 4) work effectively against discrimination; and 5) provide clear and practical guidance for the development of effective and harmonious relationships between indigenous peoples and states.

## **3. THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989 and entered into force in September 1990.

Canada played an active role in drafting the CRC and, pleased to be in the first group of ratifying countries, ratified it in December 1991. The CRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history since all UN member states (with the exception of the US and Somalia) have ratified it.