



# St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples: An Historic Milestone**

*General from Akwesasne Played Leading Role in Pursuit of UN Action to Bring UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Into Reality*

**Akwesasne, NY** - The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe was among the indigenous nations that supported and witnessed an historic milestone during the first United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples held Sept 22-23, 2014 in New York City. During the conference, UN member states adopted an outcome document dedicated to pursuing the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"The Indian Law Resource Center has worked tirelessly consulting and coordinating with indigenous peoples from around the world to prepare the outcome document adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2014. Tribal Council extends our appreciation to Karla General and her colleagues at the Center for their diligence," stated Sub-Chief Eric Thompson, "it's a positive step forward and merits international recognition."

The World Conference outcome document was adopted by consensus, after months of consultations among member states of the UN and indigenous peoples from around the world, including more than 100 tribes from the United States, First Nations from Canada, and Indian nations from Central and South America. The outcome document was adopted as a UN General Assembly Resolution, the highest action that can be achieved by the UN. All 193 member states of the UN committed in the outcome document to a number of actions that lay out a path for transforming the words of the UN Declaration into concrete commitments and actions.

The outcome document included reference to four proposals widely supported and advanced by tribes and indigenous peoples in North, Central, and South America, including those supported by the SRMT through a 2013 resolution by the United South and Eastern Tribes:

- Initiating a process to create a permanent body in the UN system that will monitor and encourage implementation of the Declaration;
- Considering options for a General Assembly decision to make it possible for Indian tribal governments and other indigenous governments to participate in UN meetings on a permanent basis;
- Giving particular attention to the epidemic of violence against indigenous women, including Indian and Alaska Native women in the United States

*(continued)*

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The outcome document calls for a system-wide action plan to be developed for the UN to bring greater coherence and effectiveness to the UN's work relating to indigenous peoples. Lt. Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, Jefferson Keel, delivered remarks to the World Conference on behalf of 159 supporting indigenous nations and organizations, emphasizing the intent of indigenous governments to rejoin the world community to realize the commitments made in the outcome document. "We are taking our places once again as members of the world community," said Keel. His statement can be found on the Indian Law Resource Center website at [www.indianlaw.org](http://www.indianlaw.org).

Along with Keel, there were many indigenous leaders and Native women's advocates from North America present who spoke in support of the outcome document. United States Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council, Keith Harper, leading the United States delegation, made supporting comments toward the implementation body for the UN Declaration. Harper called for increasing the participation of indigenous peoples and their governments in the UN and the need to empower indigenous women and end violence against them. Ambassador Harper noted, "The World Conference is not an end in itself, but a call for more decisive action."

"With these new concrete commitments by the UN and member states to protect and promote the principles of the UN Declaration, indigenous peoples have reached another milestone in the movement to achieve and realize our rights," said Karla General, staff attorney with the Indian Law Resource Center in Washington, D.C. and member of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. "Indigenous peoples and their representatives are eager to work with states and the UN to see to it that the commitments in the outcome document are carried into effect and brought into reality for all indigenous peoples in the months to come." Karla is the great-granddaughter of Chief Deskaheh (Levi General), the first indigenous person to seek justice from the international community when he traveled to the League of Nations in 1923 on behalf of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The Indian Law Resource Center, an international human rights organization working on behalf of Indian and other indigenous peoples in the Americas, is one of the organizations that played a leading role in the preparations for the World Conference over the past two years.

*\*Karla E. General (Mohawk) is a Staff Attorney with the Indian Law Resource Center in Washington, D.C., a nonprofit law and advocacy organization established and directed by American Indians. The Center provides legal assistance to Indian and Alaska Native nations who are working to protect their lands, resources, human rights, environment, and cultural heritage. Ms. General is deer clan and was raised on the Akwesasne Mohawk Territory. She earned her Juris Doctor with a Certificate in Global Law and Practice from Syracuse University College of Law in 2010. She also holds a Master's degree in Sociology from the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. Karla has worked with the Center since 2010 where she works to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to end violence against indigenous women through the Center's Safe Women, Strong Nations project. Karla is admitted to practice law in the State of New York.*

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The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the Saint Regis Mohawk People.