

## UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

### THE NATIVE COURTWORKER AND COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

“Helping Hand to Justice”

For thirty-five years, The Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia provide culturally appropriate services to aboriginal people and communities’ consistent with their needs. Our service is accomplished through access to counselling and referral services to clients and substance abuse and detox support issues; advocacy services for aboriginal family and youth; and to facilitate and enhance access to justice by assisting clients involved in the criminal justice system. Our dedicated employees are responsive to the needs of the community by providing quality, innovative and educational options where people are treated with dignity and respect.

There are thirteen aboriginal community-elected Board of Directors who are responsible for the business of the Society.

#### **Issues for Discussion with Aboriginal Organizations of British Columbia**

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: recognizes the minimum international standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world. This human rights instrument can and should be used by all indigenous peoples and organizations to ensure that indigenous peoples’ rights are recognized, respected and affirmed.

The Declaration recognizes and includes some of the articles:

**Recognizing the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child**

We provide referrals to education, legal social and community resources. Our service assists with court documents, appearances, and hearings, meetings with social workers and lawyers, custody issues, maintenance issues, apprehensions and to understand legal terminology.

**Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.**

Our Native Family and Youth Advocate Program provides crisis counselling, intervention, and advocacy on behalf of clients to address conflicts between families and the Ministry of Children and Families.

**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.**

Our Elder Support Program offers innovative cultural programs that include traditional arts, spiritual practices, preparation of indigenous foods, sewing classes on traditional clothing and song and drum-making workshops. These programs assist persons with addictions and lifestyle problems including unemployment by providing craft skills.

**States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.**

In matters of justice, our association possesses a high degree of expertise and credibility by providing comprehensive legal and social services in virtually every region of British Columbia.

Like many organizations, the issues of funding and capacity remain barriers to aboriginal people who find themselves before the courts.