



**Independent
Media Arts Alliance**
Alliance des arts
médiatiques indépendants

Montreal, QC - Thursday December 20th 2012

**Open Letter to the Right Honourable Governor General David Johnston
and the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper:**

The Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA) and the National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition (NIMAC) stand in solidarity with the Idle No More movement and fully supports Idle No More's response to the federal government's Bill C-45. Bill C-45 includes policy changes to reduce the amount of federally protected waterways, and violates First Nation treaty rights. Pushing forward legislation that makes changes to the Indian Act without consultation and consent from First Nations is not only immoral and unconstitutional, but is also in direct violation with articles 19 and 40 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

The IMAA and NIMAC also recognize that Bill C-45 is a part of Canada's long history of discrimination and abuse towards Indigenous people. This most recent piece of legislation is a perfect example of how this abuse and oppression continues and it is completely appalling.

We underline the shameful position that the federal government took during the housing and infrastructure crisis in the Attawapiskat First Nation, as the federal court ruled in a judicial review that it was "unreasonable" for the federal government to appoint a third-party manager in that situation. This prejudiced approach perpetuates discrimination and ignorance by the broader Canadian population towards Aboriginal people. This is a very sad time for the media arts sector in Canada given that we comprise, in large part, of Indigenous artists and cultural workers across the country. We also represent Canadians from all cultural groups who share this vision in artistic and social consciousness.

Many of Canada's most accomplished media artists are Indigenous and are renowned internationally for their powerful depictions of the people and of the land that have shaped our own understanding of Canada, and Canadian identity. The IMAA represents over 12,000 artists and cultural workers across the country that in turn connect these art works with diverse audiences in Canada and abroad.

We thank and honour the Indigenous people in Canada for their strong leadership and resilient stance against this corrupt government. We stand behind Chief Theresa Spence from the Attawapiskat First Nation who has inspired so many of us to step forward and call for justice and for long-term sustainability for this land. Out of respect for our ancestors and for future generations, we call upon the Prime Minister of Canada and the Governor General as representative of the crown, to meet with Chief Theresa Spence immediately. We also urge the federal government to consult with First Nations to determine how Canada's governance structure can better include First Nations as sovereign stakeholders in all decisions affecting the country's land and resources on a permanent basis.

The IMAA is a non-profit national organization working to advance and strengthen the media arts sector in Canada. Our board includes representatives from all geographic regions in Canada as well as from NIMAC, which includes Indigenous representation from across Canada.

Sincerely,

Ariel Smith, Ontario Director
National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition
C/O SAW Video
613-238-7648
ariel@sawvideo.com

Jennifer Dörner, National Director
Independent Media Arts Alliance
514-522-8240
dir@imaa.ca / www.imaa.ca