



## PRESS BRIEFING

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### WORLD FIRST

**Terrasse-Vaudreuil Becomes the First Municipality to Officially Adopt the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights (UDTR)**



Terrasse-Vaudreuil, Quebec, Canada  
June 9, 2026

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 9, 2026, the Municipality of Terrasse-Vaudreuil, Quebec, became the first municipality in the world to officially adopt the principles of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights (UDTR).

The decision was unanimously approved by the Municipal Council through a resolution entitled “*Municipal Commitment to Canopy Protection and the Recognition of the Fundamental Rights of Trees.*”

The resolution represents the first institutional implementation of the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights, an international initiative launched in Paris in 2018 by Ricardo Rey.

Far more than a symbolic endorsement, the resolution commits the municipality to incorporating these principles into its environmental policies, urban planning framework, public communications, educational initiatives, and the long-term stewardship of its urban forest.

By taking this step, Terrasse-Vaudreuil establishes an international precedent and demonstrates how the principles of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights can be translated into concrete public policy at the local level.

The decision marks a significant development in the growing global conversation surrounding biodiversity, environmental governance, and the relationship between human communities and the living systems upon which they depend.

## AN INITIATIVE LAUNCHED IN PARIS IN 2018

The Universal Declaration of Tree Rights traces its origins to a World Call launched in Paris on November 18, 2018, by French author and environmental advocate Ricardo Rey.

The initiative emerged from a simple observation: despite their essential role in sustaining life on Earth, trees continue to face unprecedented pressures from deforestation, urban expansion, soil degradation, climate disruption, and the fragmentation of natural ecosystems.

Rather than proposing a purely environmental campaign, the project sought to open a broader reflection on the place of trees within contemporary societies and on the responsibilities that human communities bear toward the living world.

The World Call became the starting point of an international initiative that would lead to the creation of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights, the Assembly of the Tree, and the International Convention on the Rights of the Tree.

Since 2018, the initiative has brought together citizens, researchers, jurists, artists, elected officials, environmental professionals, and representatives of civil society from several countries. It has also contributed to a growing international discussion on the ethical, cultural, ecological, and legal dimensions of humanity's relationship with trees.

Today, more than 87,000 people around the world have expressed their support for the Declaration, reflecting a growing interest in new approaches to the protection of trees and the living systems upon which human societies depend.



**Ricardo Rey**

*Author and Founder of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights (UDTR)  
Founder of the Assembly of the Tree*

## **THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF TREE RIGHTS**

The Universal Declaration of Tree Rights is founded upon three guiding principles intended to redefine the relationship between human societies and trees.

Rather than viewing trees solely as natural resources, landscape features, or economic assets, the Declaration invites a broader reflection on their essential role within the living systems that sustain life on Earth.

### **Article 1**

The tree is recognized as a living being, a source of life, and a common good of humanity.

### **Article 2**

Life on Earth depends upon the existence of trees.

### **Article 3**

Humanity must act toward trees in a spirit of fraternity, responsibility, and solidarity.

Together, these principles establish an ethical framework that emphasizes the intrinsic value of trees and their indispensable contribution to ecological balance, biodiversity, climate regulation, and human well-being.

The Declaration does not seek to replace existing environmental policies or legal frameworks. Rather, it provides a common set of principles intended to guide public reflection, encourage civic engagement, and inspire new approaches to the protection of trees at local, national, and international levels.

## **FROM THE SACRED TREE TO THE RIGHTS OF THE TREE**

Throughout history and across civilizations, trees have occupied a unique place in human societies.

They have served as symbols of life, wisdom, protection, justice, memory, and continuity. Sacred groves, village trees, council trees, and ceremonial trees can be found in the cultural traditions of virtually every continent.

Long before the emergence of modern environmental concerns, many societies recognized that trees possessed a significance extending far beyond their material or economic value.

The Universal Declaration of Tree Rights builds upon this historical and cultural legacy while responding to the ecological realities of the twenty-first century.

Its purpose is not to revive ancient traditions, but to draw inspiration from a long-standing human intuition: that trees are more than objects, commodities, or landscape elements. They are living beings whose existence is intimately connected to the survival and well-being of human societies.

In this sense, the Declaration seeks to bridge ancient cultural understandings and contemporary ecological knowledge, offering a framework through which the relationship between humanity and trees can be reconsidered in light of today's environmental challenges.

## **AN APPROACH THAT GOES BEYOND LEGAL PERSONHOOD**

In recent years, a growing number of legal initiatives around the world have explored the possibility of granting legal personhood to elements of nature, including rivers, forests, ecosystems, and other living entities.

The Universal Declaration of Tree Rights acknowledges these developments but does not limit itself to the question of legal personhood.

Its starting point is more fundamental: the recognition that trees possess an intrinsic value and play an indispensable role in sustaining the living systems upon which all human societies depend.

For this reason, the Declaration distinguishes between several concepts that are often treated as interchangeable, including tree rights, legal protection, legal representation, legal personhood, and legal subjecthood.

This distinction allows for a broader and more inclusive discussion about the place of trees within contemporary legal and political systems.

The Declaration does not prescribe a single legal model. Instead, it offers an ethical and conceptual framework through which governments, institutions, communities, and citizens may explore different ways of recognizing and protecting the fundamental interests of trees.

In this sense, the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights seeks not merely to answer a legal question, but to encourage a wider reflection on humanity's responsibilities toward the living world.

## **THE ASSEMBLY OF THE TREE**

The Assembly of the Tree emerged from the World Call launched in 2018 as a practical framework for dialogue, reflection, and collective action.

Rather than functioning as a centralized organization, the Assembly of the Tree is conceived as a process that can be established at any scale: local, municipal, regional, provincial, national, or international.

Each Assembly of the Tree is formed around a specific sphere of responsibility and brings together the individuals, institutions, experts, elected officials, and citizens concerned with that territory or issue.

Its purpose is to create a space where the principles of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights can be discussed, interpreted, and translated into concrete actions adapted to local realities.

In this sense, the Assembly of the Tree is not merely a forum for discussion. It is a tool for collective intelligence designed to help communities explore how the rights of trees may be reflected in public policies, environmental governance, education, land management, urban planning, and civic life.

The Assembly established following the adoption of the Declaration by the Municipality of Terrasse-Vaudreuil illustrates this approach. Bringing together elected officials, citizens, and local stakeholders, it provides a framework through which the municipality can collectively explore practical ways of implementing the principles it has chosen to endorse.

By encouraging dialogue rather than imposing predetermined solutions, the Assembly of the Tree seeks to foster responses that are both locally grounded and collectively developed.

## **AN INTERNATIONAL DYNAMIC**

Since its launch in 2018, the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights has developed from an initial call for support into an international network of individuals and organizations engaged in advancing the recognition and protection of trees.

Today, more than 87,000 people from around the world have expressed their support for the Declaration, reflecting a growing interest in new approaches to biodiversity protection, environmental responsibility, and humanity's relationship with the living world.

Over the years, representatives, researchers, legal scholars, environmental professionals, artists, and citizens have contributed to the development of the initiative across several countries, including France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire.

This international dynamic takes many forms. It includes public awareness initiatives, research projects, legal and ethical reflections, educational activities, cultural programs, and the gradual establishment of Assemblies of the Tree adapted to local contexts and responsibilities.

In Madagascar, the work of Cyrille Cornu on baobabs, guardian trees, and ancient forests has helped bring international attention to the ecological, cultural, and symbolic importance of remarkable trees and forest ecosystems.

The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights by the Municipality of Terrasse-Vaudreuil represents a new stage in this international development. For the first time, the principles of the Declaration have moved beyond public support and international advocacy to find direct institutional expression within a municipal government.

In this sense, the decision taken by Terrasse-Vaudreuil is not an isolated event. It is part of a broader international movement seeking to explore new ways of recognizing the importance of trees within contemporary societies.

## **TERRASSE-VAUDREUIL: A WORLD FIRST**

On June 9, 2026, the Municipal Council of Terrasse-Vaudreuil, Quebec, unanimously adopted a resolution entitled “*Municipal Commitment to Canopy Protection and the Recognition of the Fundamental Rights of Trees.*”

With this decision, Terrasse-Vaudreuil became the first municipality in the world to officially adopt the principles of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights and to incorporate them into a framework of municipal governance.

The resolution recognizes trees as living beings whose integrity, health, and essential needs deserve consideration and protection within the municipal ecosystem. It also formally endorses the three founding principles of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights.

Beyond this recognition, the municipality has committed itself to integrating the principles of the Declaration into its environmental policies, urban planning framework, green asset management practices, public communications, educational initiatives, and long-term stewardship of its tree canopy.

The resolution further mandates the municipality's environmental committee to work with partners and stakeholders in developing practical measures and long-term objectives that will support the progressive implementation of these commitments.

The decision emerged from a citizen-led process initiated following a public screening of the documentary *Des arbres et des arts* by filmmaker André Desrochers. The discussions that followed opened a broader reflection on the place of trees within contemporary society and on the role municipalities can play in their protection.

More than a symbolic endorsement, the decision demonstrates that the principles of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights can be translated into concrete public action. In doing so, Terrasse-Vaudreuil establishes an international precedent and offers a practical example for municipalities seeking to strengthen the protection of biodiversity, urban forests, and the living systems upon which their communities depend.

## A NEW STEP

The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights by the Municipality of Terrasse-Vaudreuil represents an important milestone in the development of an initiative that began in Paris in 2018 and has since grown into an international movement.

For the first time, the principles of the Declaration have moved beyond public support, advocacy, and international discussion to find formal expression within a municipal institution.

The significance of this decision lies not only in its symbolic value, but also in its practical implications. It demonstrates that the principles of the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights can serve as a framework for public reflection, civic engagement, and local action.

Whether other municipalities choose to follow this path remains to be seen. What is certain, however, is that Terrasse-Vaudreuil has established a precedent and opened a new chapter in the evolving relationship between human communities and the trees upon which they depend.

Eight years after the launch of the World Call for the Universal Declaration of Tree Rights, the question is no longer whether such a conversation can take place. It has already begun.

## **PRESS CONTACT**

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