



CONFEDERACY OF TREATY SIX FIRST NATIONS

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Peoples
12th session
Agenda item 4

The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations of western Canada have sent a delegation this year to once again participate in the technical meeting on the Decade and the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. We have been sent here to the United Nations with specific instructions. To insure that our inherent and treaty rights are protected with in the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- To insure that the Declaration will stand that test of time and that language is strong enough so as not to compromise the rights of our future generations.
- Prior to coming to Geneva we convened meetings with our elders and leaders to discuss the Draft Declaration.
- Although there are a lot of positives in the Draft Declaration we do have problems with some of the wording and provisions in the Draft Declaration as it now stand. It is unfortunate that we will not be able to propose any more amendments to the Draft Declaration. We went through the draft clause by clause with our elders and they have indicated to us areas of serious concern regarding our inherent and treaty rights. Although we did not meet the deadline of May 15 we will be submitting our concerns as told to us by our elders.
- The most important concern is that the right to sovereignty and self-determination in its truest sense be retained without any qualifier. In this regard we are in support of the other indigenous Peoples who would like to have article 31 removed because of its limiting implications.
- We also continue to have serious problems with the continuing reference to indigenous Peoples as "ethnic".
- These are only two examples of many concerns that we still have with the Draft Declaration in its present form.
- We would also again reiterate that it is imperative that some concrete and meaningful action be taken not only by this body but also by the Sub-Commission to ensure that there is full participation by Indigenous Peoples at all levels where the Draft Declaration will be discussed. This could be done as soon as possible so that it will facilitate direct involvement as soon as 1995.
- We are also concerned that because the debate on the Draft Declaration has been closed that by no means is the work of the Working Group finished. Much more needs to be done and accomplished by the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in the area of standard setting. We also need to continue to monitor the progress of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as it makes its way through the United Nations system, among other activities.
- Another concern that we have is what exactly is meant by the "permanent forum". We are hoping that we do not lose the momentum and the credibility that has been gained by the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples for a forum that is yet unclear in its composition and mandate. It could be very well be the W.G.I.P. could be that "permanent forum" in a restructured form to be agreed upon by Indigenous Peoples. It is also our hope that the program of the upcoming decade of Indigenous Peoples will continue to promote concrete, action-oriented,

standard-setting activities that will be of a direct benefit to Indigenous Peoples at the grass-roots level. In other words, actions taken here and agreed upon should be reflected in the actions taken at the national level of the countries in which Indigenous Peoples now reside. We thank you for this opportunity and may the Creator guide us in our deliberations.