

DR DAVID AHENAKW, ASSEMBLY OF ³¹ FIRST NATIONS

THANK YOU, ~~MR CHAIRMAN~~ (OR MADAME CHAIRPERSON)

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME, AND THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS OBSERVER DELEGATION, TO BE HERE AND TO BE ABLE TO TAKE PART IN THIS WORKING GROUP. AT THIS TIME I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A BRIEF GENERAL STATEMENT.

FIRST, I WOULD ~~ALSO LIKE TO~~ OFFER YOU OUR CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES AS YOU ASSUME THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE WORKING GROUP.

~~MY DELEGATION HERE SPEAKS ON BEHALF OF THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS - THE AFN - OF CANADA. OUR FIRST NATIONS INCLUDE PEOPLES OF DOZENS OF LANGUAGES, PEOPLES WHO LIVE IN FISHING VILLAGES AND NORTHERN SETTLEMENTS, IN THE PRAIRIES AND IN THE FORESTS, SOME ARE QUITE ISOLATED AND SOME LIVE NEAR OR IN URBAN AREAS. WE ARE DIVERSE PEOPLES NUMBERING PERHAPS 400,000.~~

THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS DELEGATION PLEDGE OUR FULLEST SUPPORT AND COOPERATION TO YOU AS YOU CONTINUE THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF YOUR PREDECESSOR, MR. ^{EVEDUH} EIDE OF NORWAY, ON BEHALF OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE WORLD.

EYE-DUH

WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO MR. EIDE FOR THE WORK THAT HE HAS DONE AND WE FEEL THAT, WITH YOUR WELL-KNOWN EXPERIENCE, THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WILL BE WELL-SERVED.

WGIP 84/NAM. CAN/4

THANK YOU, ~~MR. CHALAMAN~~ MADAME CHAIRPERSON)

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INDIGENT. EVERY EFFORT SHOULD AND MUST, THEREFORE, BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT AS MANY OF THEM ARE ABLE ^{to come} BEFORE YOU.
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THE AFN OBSERVER DELEGATION IS ALSO PREPARED TO WORK WITH YOU IN DEVELOPING THE DEFINITION OF INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS. WE SHARE THE OPINION THAT ANY DEFINITION MUST TAKE ~~WANT~~ FULL ACCOUNT OF THE VIEWS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THEMSELVES. WE ARE BEST PLACED TO KNOW WHO WE ARE. AND ANY DEFINITION THAT FINALLY EMERGES MUST REFLECT THAT WE, THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, HAVE THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE WHO OUR CITIZENS, OR MEMBERS, ARE. HOWEVER, WE AGREE WITH THOSE PREVIOUS SPEAKERS WHO EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT IT WAS NOW PREMATURE TO DEFINE INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS.

OUR SITUATION IN CANADA IS DISTINCT FROM THAT OF MANY OTHER INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ESPECIALLY FROM THOSE IN LATIN AMERICA. IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS GUATEMALA, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AS YOU KNOW, DAILY FACE DEATH AND LACK EVEN THE MINIMAL RESOURCES TO SUSTAIN THEIR LIVES.

THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS WORKING GROUP MAKE A THOROUGH APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION IN GUATEMALA BECAUSE WE ARE ^{UNITED} ~~IN~~ WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THAT COUNTRY IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS SPELLED OUT IN THE INTERNATIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS AND NUMEROUS OTHER CONVENTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS WHICH ARE IN FORCE.

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF COUNTRIES WHICH ARE MEMBER STATES OF THIS ORGANISATION MUST CONFORM TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND RESPECT RIGHTS WHICH LIE AT THE VERY FOUNDATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER FREELY ADOPTED BY ALL MEMBER STATES.

ONE SUCH BASIC RIGHT IS THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION BY WHICH ~~THE~~ PEOPLES ARE ENTITLED TO CHOOSE FREELY HOW THEY WILL BE GOVERNED.

IN OUR CASE, THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS DOES NOT SEEK THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF CANADA. WE ARE ~~INSTEAD~~ ^{STRUGGLING TO RESTORE OUR} ~~ABORIGINAL TITLE~~ AUTONOMY OR SELF-GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE CANADIAN FEDERATION. WE HAVE NEVER BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE LAST YEAR TO PARTICIPATE IN FORMING THE LIFE OF THE CANADIAN STATE.

WE WERE SELF-GOVERNING FIRST NATIONS ENTITLED TO OUR LAND IN CANADA BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEAN SETTLERS. TODAY, WE FIND OURSELVES IN A SITUATION IN WHICH WE ARE STRUGGLING FOR EXPLICIT CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF OUR ABORIGINAL TITLE AND THE RIGHT TO OUR NATURAL RESOURCES, FOR THE PHYSICAL INTEGRITY AND SECURITY OF OUR FIRST NATIONS, FOR OUR RIGHT TO INTERNAL SELF-GOVERNMENT, AND FOR OUR INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

TO BE RECOGNISED AS SUCH AND IMPLEMENTED BY THE OTHER PARTY
TO THOSE TREATIES, NAMELY, THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AS
SUCCESSOR TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

MADAME CHAIRPERSON, MY DELEGATION WOULD
BE PREPARED TO INFORM YOU OF POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS WHEN WE RESUME ITEM 4
LATER.

THANK YOU.

(1)

SUMMARY OF STATEMENTS BY DAVID AHENAKEW, NATIONAL CHIEF, ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS (CANADA)

ITEM 4: (REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS)

Dr. Ahenakew pointed out that the First Nations were self-governing and entitled to their land before the arrival (in Canada) of European settlers.

Today, the First Nations were struggling for explicit constitutional recognition of their aboriginal title and the right to their natural resources, for their physical integrity and security as distinct peoples, for internal self-government, and for the recognition and implementation of their international treaties.

Responding to the remarks of the representative of Canada, Dr. Ahenakew said that the Bill to remove discrimination against Indian women contained other problems, and the Self-Government Bill falls far short of what the Indian peoples wanted. Moreover, whereas the Canadian Constitution purported to recognise and affirm aboriginal rights, the Government was extinguishing those rights in the land claims process.

2/8/84 ✓

To: Committee Secretary

This is a summary of the remarks by the National Chief of the AFN (Dr David Ahenakew).

I hope it will be useful to your work.

You already have copies of the full statements.

Just Saunders
AFN Delegation