

Second session  
United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
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Agenda item4(c): Health

Intervention of Aotearoa Indigenous Rights Trust  
Aotearoa/New Zealand  
Presented by Tracey Whare, trustee

1. We wish to make 3 recommendations in relation to health. One that the members of the Permanent Forum call for an urgent report into the causes of Indigenous youth suicide. That such a report makes recommendations to both States and International agencies as to how this problem may be solved;
2. Two, that an international workshop be convened to address the health needs of indigenous women and children with particular attention given to the issue of domestic violence;
3. Three, that the Permanent Forum call for the immediate adoption of the adopted Sub commission articles 22 –24 of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These articles relate specifically to health.

Youth suicide

4. According to New Zealand 1996 Census statistics, suicide is the second main cause of death for youth in New Zealand. Suicide rates are

higher for young men than for young women. However, within each group, Maori youth have higher suicide rates than non-Maori youth.

5. Young Maori women have higher rates of hospitalization due to self-injury than both Maori men and non-Maori. This suggests that young Maori women may have higher attempted suicide rates than young Maori men.

6. Too many of our young people are killing themselves. The New Zealand government has not prioritized this issue. The death of our youth can have devastating effects on our communities as those that are left try to make sense of their loss and strive to ensure that other youth do not make the same choice.

7. This concern has also been the basis of other indigenous peoples interventions including many Native Canadian peoples. Our recommendation is also complimentary to the comments of the Permanent Forum member, Ms Ida Nicolaisen whom during the high level discussion last week called for a study on urban Indigenous youth.

#### Domestic violence

8. Domestic violence is also another urgent problem. The impact of violence on children and youth within the home is disturbing and appalling. Children and youth who are both witness to and are the subjects of domestic violence often themselves become the perpetrators of violence. In my work as a family lawyer, I have seen Maori men become frustrated by their lack of choices in relation to employment and education. This can lead to the

internalization of that frustration which manifests as physical, psychological and economic violence towards family members.

9. The New Zealand government needs to prioritize resources for this issue especially for Maori who live in rural and isolated areas. An international workshop that addressed this issue would greatly assist the efforts that are already being made by Indigenous Peoples in their national situations.

#### Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

10. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contains three articles that relate specifically to health. Indigenous Peoples have the right to improve their social and economic condition, to determine priorities and strategies for their development and deliver their own programmes and, the right to their traditional medicines and health practices as well as access to all medical institutions and health services without discrimination. If these rights were adopted, a clear and robust framework would be established that would allow for policies and programmes to be established that would begin to address the root causes of health problems including youth suicide and domestic violence.

11. We therefore urge the members of the Permanent Forum to include these three recommendations in their final report.