

# International Treaty Four Secretariat

An Organization in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic  
And Social Council

Working Group On Indigenous Populations  
16<sup>th</sup> Session 27 July -31 July 1998

Item 9            Consideration of the working paper of the Special Rapporteur of the  
                         Sub-Commission on Indigenous Peoples and their relationship to the land.

Madam Chairperson  
Distinguished Members of the Working Group  
Fellow Indigenous Peoples of the World

It is with great honour that I represent the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations FSIN and the Treaty Four Secretariat at this valuable forum. I am thankful for this opportunity to address agenda Item 9.

Madam Chairperson, first of all, on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples in our territory, we would like to extend our thanks for your hard work in the topic area of Indigenous people and their relationship to the land.

We are here to present a situation that has legal implications in regards to the violation of the treaties signed about land jurisdiction. Our relationship to the land is of unique and important significance. We have great respect for our land as it represents our source of life and existence. The importance of our land has gone unrecognized and ignored by the state for years and the signing of treaties represents our recognition of sharing the land as a partnership.

An important piece of Canadian history in regards to our relationship to land and with respect to its legal implications is the Natural Resources Transfer Act of 1930 whereby the Federal Government assigned land and resource jurisdiction to the provincial level without the consent or involvement of our people. Resources such as potash, oil, and various minerals exist in great abundance in our land and territories and have been used to great advantage by multi national corporations and the State. International law was settled by the papal bull Sublimus Deus, 1537 which says «that the Indians are truly men...and that they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and possession of their property...should the contrary happen, it shall be null and of no effect.» This law is supported by other proclamations, constitutions, and treaties.

Madam Chair, failure of the state to recognize indigenous rights to lands, territories, and resources is considered the most fundamental and widespread problem as addressed in your preliminary working paper. Therefore, it is recommended that this widespread problem be dealt with in a pro-active mode. In Saskatchewan, not only do the Federal and provincial

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governments pose a threat to land and resource rights ; Another powerful threat that exists are the multi-national corporations. The battle for our rights to land and the resources within is increasing and becoming more intense. The fact that this is considered the most fundamental and widespread problem, we wish to emphasize the importance of indigenous rights to land and the resources within. We wish to distinguish this problem as one of prime importance as our very existence and rights to the land and the resources are being violated more so today than ever before.

Finally Madam Chair, I conclude with great thanks in your recognition of this as a widespread problem, for acknowledging our land rights, and for your attention to this matter.

Meegwetch.