

**Statement by on behalf of the Native Youth Sexual Health
Network and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, 15 May 2012
Twelfth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, May 20,
2013**

Agenda Item 3 (a): Health

Honorable Chairperson, Members of the Permanent Forum, distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples, sisters and brothers here today; The Native Youth Sexual Health Network and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network would like to make visible in this forum issues relating to sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice which receive little attention from human rights bodies generally due to the ongoing stigma of even talking about sex in the context of human rights. Conversely, the global HIV/AIDS movement has also invisibilized Indigenous peoples' distinct expertise, knowledge and presence. We are here today as part of our continuing work as grassroots and international organizations and communities to bridge this gap. We are here representing the leadership of those most affected by HIV/AIDS in our communities - youth, women and respecting the leadership of Indigenous people living with HIV.

This joint statement is taken up during a review year to emphasize the need to take expedient action on the implementation of previous recommendations to address human rights violations for Indigenous sexual and reproductive health and HIV. Dialogues to date on HIV and Indigenous Peoples within previous sessions have not resulted in addressing the HIV epidemic and in fact many of our communities are actually facing worsening conditions when it comes to these issues. These are reflected not only in poor health statistics but also the stories and traditional knowledge of our communities.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: We reaffirm the recommendation presented as part of the eighth session that the United Nations Population Fund organize, in coordination with the secretariat of the Forum an international expert workshop on the theme "Indigenous peoples and health, with a special emphasis on sexual and reproductive health. This is supported by statements of the Permanent Forum (4th session, 110) referencing the Millennium Development Goals & sexual and reproductive health. However, the report from this meeting only indicates a report back from UNFPA on reproductive health alone. We remind the PF and UNFPA that the original recommendation was on sexual and reproductive health and that the right to health includes issues of sexuality, gender identity, HIV and STI prevention and the promotion of healthy, consensual relationships that goes beyond sex simply for the purposes of reproduction.

Recommendation 2: We additionally call action based off of recommendation 64 of the 2nd session that the WHO, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the United Nations Population Fund convene a workshop on indigenous health, with the goal of addressing a system-wide strategy to address the health needs of

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indigenous peoples and setting out the terms of reference for a study on the health needs of indigenous peoples, with particular emphasis on indigenous children and women including infant mortality, reproductive rights, and the collection of data relating to these issues.

Recommendation 3: Following up on recommendation 64 of the tenth session we ask for a renewed commitment to action on the Permanent Forum requests that UNICEF, when completing its strategic policy framework on indigenous peoples, include indigenous youth in the design of the policy. In addition, particular attention is needed to reflect the diversity among indigenous children and youth especially groups facing manifold discrimination based on gender, disability or sexual orientation. As part of this revisit we support the recommendation from the 5th session of the PF that UNICEF, UNAIDS and other UN Agencies that claim to have a global mandate and work with Indigenous peoples globally to expand the regions for support on sexual and reproductive health to include North American Indigenous youth whose experiences and expertise are invisibilized because of this region being labelled as 'developed' despite health indicators that say otherwise.

The last time HIV and AIDs or sexual health was brought to this Forum was 2006 at the 5th session. Since then the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network has supported the work of International Indigenous Working Group on HIV and AIDS from the Toronto charter, which was endorsed by the Permanent Forum in paragraph 38 of the final report. The Native Youth Sexual Health Network has facilitated the creation of 2 National Youth Council on HIV and AIDS - the National Aboriginal Youth Council on HIV and AIDS in Canada (NAYCHA) in 2006 and the National Native American Youth Council on HIV and AIDS (NNYC-HIV) in the United States in 2012, who currently represent Indigenous youth in North America taking leadership in their communities. In a Joint statement from World AIDS Day in 2012 the two councils came together and had this to say: "Our nations will be stronger if we centralize our conversations around support for youth to make decisions about their own bodies and share knowledge about HIV and AIDS. On this World AIDS Day theme of "Getting to Zero" let's also commit to getting to: Zero violence, Zero poverty, Zero suicides, Zero shame for who we are, what we aspire to be, and where we come from."

Recommendation 4: As per session 10, we additionally encourage UNICEF to include in its ongoing implementation of recommendation 66 on data on Indigenous children and youth the inclusion of indicators on the rates of HIV, STI's and other relevant sexual and reproductive health issues. Increased epidemiological data with a focus on Indigenous ethnicity will help strengthen IIWGHA and NYSHN's claim that HIV and AIDS disproportionately affects Indigenous peoples internationally.

Recommendation 5: While we recognize the work of the Inter-Agency Support Group, we note the coordination of this group with external Indigenous community organizations has been severely lacking, and is in fact very inaccessible to anyone not identified as a 'UN expert'. We recommend this support group improve its transparency to each other, as well as participants at the Permanent Forum.

Furthermore we call on everyone in this room to understand how you are contributing to, or dismantling stigma and discrimination associated with issues like sex education, HIV/AIDS, STIs or sexual health. Decolonizing our sexuality is also part of our commitment to advance human rights.

In conclusion, we note the very real and urgent nature of this issue that demands coordinated efforts on all fronts including the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples living with, and affected by HIV/AIDS. We can no longer afford to have isolated issue-based discussions, but must recognize the interconnectedness of environmental violence, such as resource extraction and its impacts on sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice in order to have real and meaningful change.

Thank you.