



UNITED NATIONS  
WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS  
*Geneva 19 to 23 July 2004*

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Ecospirituality Foundation has spoken out several times here at the United Nations in support of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in general and, in particular, the San Carlos Apaches in their fight to defend their sacred site, Mt. Graham.

Today we stand before this Assembly to plead that we should not forget the identity and the cultural demands of Native Europeans, who, alongside so many other Indigenous Peoples, are experiencing the same difficulties in facing up to life in a world shared with majority-ruled societies.

Our plea is inspired by the right of every autonomous People to declare themselves as such, without being discriminated against or treated as outcasts, free to carry on leading their own traditional existences.

The presence of Indigenous Peoples, with all their own particular cultural attributes, is also a feature of the continent of Europe. Just as with the Native Peoples of the other continents, the traditions of Native Europeans call to mind the cultural heritage they are based on, a source of civilisation with a fair and morally dignified social structure. They established an ancient culture, rich in knowledge and art, that was in no way inferior to others of its time, such as in Egypt or the Andes.

This peaceful cultural tradition still survives today, after resisting enforced integration by the various power groups that have succeeded one another down through the history of this continent. Today it remains as a fragmented population, split into many separate communities spread across the European continent, who are intimidated by the persecutions they have suffered and seek protection to allow them to demonstrate their cultural identity and live freely according to its moral values of brotherhood, respect for the individual and free knowledge.

It is a forgotten People, trying to re-establish itself within the visible history of this millennium and to make its own contribution to the destiny of humankind. The cultural contribution, based on freedom and brotherhood, survives today in the arts, music, the religious practices into which it has been co-opted, myths and the common memory of the manner of being of many Europeans.

There are Peoples in Europe who are fighting for the survival of their cultural identity and the protection of their religious rights and sacred lands. At the moment in Carnac, Brittany, in the North West of France, there is a population fighting to defend its cultural heritage and, just as in the case of Mt. Graham, the San Carlos Apache sacred mountain in Arizona, they are having to fight for free access to their own sacred sites and to protect their environment.

In Carnac the fight has been going on for more than thirteen years. That is, since the French state decided to fence in the megalithic site, considered among the most extensive and well-known in the world, effectively denying use of it to its inhabitants.

The megalithic site of Carnac is a traditional heritage, representing the inheritance from a remote past thousands of years old and is the highest spiritual and cultural reference point for the local inhabitants.

For those inhabitants, the megalithic site of Carnac is central to their cultural and social identity, linked to their traditions. For centuries they have been accustomed to regarding their megalithic site as a sacred site, where they can celebrate all their important ceremonies, citizens' assemblies and cultural, artistic and religious events.

Then, in 1991, the French Government passed a project for the construction of an enormous tourist centre, denying free access to the site for the local citizens and expropriating all buildings standing on the site.

After more than ten years of fierce protests by the inhabitants of Carnac, the project has partly been stopped, but they are still denied access to the site and there are fears that other new projects may violate the sacredness of the site.

We bring this request in their name, as spokespeople for their hopes, that this Assembly should listen to their plea to be granted respect for their cultural identity and the right to take their place in history alongside the majority-ruled society, which even today still tries to set itself above the other native populations of this planet.

Thank you Mr. President.

Thank you everybody for listening to this appeal.

Giancarlo Barbadoro

*Chairperson Ecospirituality Foundation*

*Representative Apache Survival Coalition*