

Agenda Item 3. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum

(b) Indigenous Women

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Eighth Session

Quebec Native Women Inc. /Femmes Autochtones du Quebec Inc.

Ellen Gabriel, President

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Mme Chair, PF delegates, elders, and all my relations. It is with great honor that we are participating today on behalf of the many Indigenous women who could not be here today. While we are encouraged by the various reports of the UNPFII, there remains much work to be done for the world's Indigenous Peoples. Canada and other states that continue to oppose the UNDRIP have demonstrated a lack of respect and understanding of this important instrument that would truly address the discrimination of Indigenous people in particular, Indigenous women.

Due to the impacts of colonization Indigenous women suffer multiple discriminations based on race, gender and economic status. Indigenous women's roles and authority continue to be targeted and undermined through legislation under Canada's Indian Act.

Decolonization should include traditional governance structures whereby Indigenous women are partners in decision-making processes. In Canada, forced assimilation practices are evident in policies and programs which threaten the nationality and identity of Indigenous peoples. Therefore it is important that we create our own governance structures that reflect women's roles in order to prevent further assimilation of Indigenous peoples.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an international instrument that addresses the situation of multiple discriminations faced by Indigenous women, even though the Canadian government has yet to endorse the Declaration.

It is therefore disappointing to note that the Government of Canada continues to oppose the UNDRIP that recognizes the equal rights of Indigenous peoples. While some attempts have been made by Canada to provide Indigenous women and their communities access to human rights instruments, the Indian Act continues to undermine the equality of Indigenous women's rights.

Without the reinforcement of Indigenous women's role in nation building, there is no assurance that our traditional customs, languages and forms of governance will be perpetuated. Consequently, our identity as Indigenous peoples could be reduced to artifacts in museums. Therefore it is imperative that all states practice in good faith, the process of free, prior and informed consent.

And while the international community congratulates the Government of Canada for its June 11th, 2008 apology to the Indian Residential School survivors, there has been no change in the status quo. Poverty, inadequate housing, sexual discrimination amongst the Aboriginal population remains unchanged.

Quebec Native Women recommends to the PFII that all member states including Canada do the following:

- Create a national strategy on promoting and preventing violence against Indigenous Women and Children; which incorporates customary Indigenous initiatives of child care and family support
- Provide public services, consulted with and adapted to Indigenous culture and traditions
- That all states implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child; as well as implementing the UNDRIP Articles 21, 22, 23, 24 inter alia, to adequately help Indigenous peoples overcome the effects of colonization.
- That all states implement the norm of free, prior and informed consent, including the rights pertaining to the equality of Indigenous women
- A gender based analysis be implemented in all state policies and programs especially those that affect the collective rights of Indigenous peoples
- That access to safe water be recognized as a basic human right and that Indigenous people have a meaningful role in the watershed protection
- Ensure that states ensure that Indigenous women and their organizations will be equitably represented in the decision making processes regarding land management and water rights
- Prevent the exploitation of Indigenous lands before the settlement of the land claims
- Urge the few remaining states opposed to the UNDRIP, in particular Canada fully support and implement the UNDRIP.