

**UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
(EMRIP)**

11-15 July 2016

Intervention on Agenda Item 6, Read by Patrick Buffalo

Thank you Mr. Chair,

We begin by thanking the Chair of this Agenda Item, Chief Willie Littlechild, for his years of service as a member of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as this is his last session in his final term. [Thanks in Cree]. We in Maskwacis are proud of your continuing service in the interest of advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We note past studies of the Expert Mechanism addressing this matter, as well as the Thematic Report in 2013 of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. This report dealt with the adverse impacts of business-related activities on the rights of Indigenous Peoples through the lens of the UN Declaration. Today we focus on a different perspective on business enterprises and indigenous peoples. The work completed to date has, with good reason, focused on experiences of human rights violations.

Our contribution is in regards to business and reconciliation. Conference Room Paper 4 from the 8th Session of the Expert Mechanism set out a Compilation of the Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada relating to the UN Declaration, specifically Call to Action 92.

Under that Call to Action, the TRC called for Indigenous peoples to have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

In order to achieve this Call to Action, our peoples must be strong. We are strengthened by the full bundle of rights described in the UN Declaration, including most importantly self-determination; and the **respect, recognition, observance and enforcement** of rights held further to Treaties.

The Expert Mechanism confirmed in their 2012 Comment on the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights that our Treaties must not be violated or overridden by investment or trade agreements. Our Treaties must also provide the framework for our participation in

mainstream economies with the understanding that treaties also represented economic agreements with non-Indigenous peoples.

Our strength also comes from taking ownership, right from the individual to the collective level of development. This requires capacity building amongst Indigenous Peoples and individuals in order to appropriately determine impacts of development and business decisions. These determinations happen in the context of our own Indigenous knowledge systems, aspirations and rights frameworks. Our idea of success may never match those of the mainstream. We must create the space to allow our peoples respond effectively on our own terms!

A significant aspect of capacity building is skill development. Our history and current status in the fields of education, employment and training is pock-marked by racism, discrimination, statutory and regulatory limitations, and many other impediments.

In moving towards reconciliation, such impediments must be lifted. We must be able to exercise the full scope of our rights as Indigenous Peoples. For many years, mentorship on engaging in mainstream economies has come from those outside Indigenous Communities. We want to promote mentorship from within.

Indigenous models of development are indispensable to better and more sustainable development. We need to drive our own economies. The drivers are our own peoples.

Thank you.