

Statement to the United Nations 2017 Permanent Forum on Indigenous  
Issues from Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations  
Fourth Vice Chief Heather Bear

---

Thank you Madame Chair. I would also like to give thanks to the Creator for giving us this day to assemble together on behalf of Indigenous peoples around the world.

As Fourth Vice Chief of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, I bring greetings on behalf of the 74 sovereign Nations with a population of over 150,000 peoples.

Canada has agreed that there must be improved relations and partnerships with its Indigenous peoples; however, the status quo remains in terms of meaningful action at both the grassroots levels and the Indigenous organizations that support them.

Canada was ordered by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to stop discriminating against First Nations children through underfunding of the First Nations child welfare system. Canada remains non-compliant with this order claiming that equal funding too quickly could somehow harm the children the funding is meant to help. How absurd and condescending is that?!

Our communities remain in crisis. Children going to bed hungry every night. Water in many Indigenous communities remains unsafe to drink. Elders are denied coverage for their prescriptions. Indigenous youth and children as young as nine are committing suicide. Children are born with HIV. Violence against Indigenous women and children remains high.

And let's not forget the La Loche school massacre.

Underscoring these issues is the harsh reality of racism. For example, a young Indigenous man, Colten Boushie, was shot by a farmer for entering his property with a group of young friends. This shed light on a long-standing racial divide throughout Saskatchewan.

Racism can be eliminated. I commend Mayor Rob Hundebay of the town of Elbow for signing a historic MOU with FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron for the elimination of racism. This is a true act of reconciliation and it is my hope that this action sets an example that others will follow.

These issues require that Canada choose giant leaps over baby steps in fully implementing the UNDRIP.

Solutions must include capacity building for Indigenous communities and organizations.

Canada must implement an action plan that is supported by legislation and designated funds.

Furthermore, we recommend that Member States report on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples within the State, in partnership with Indigenous governments, utilizing the UN Human Development Index.

We remind Canada that there is an urgent need to respect, promote and enforce the rights of Indigenous peoples affirmed in Treaties. Our Treaties represent an exchange of rights for land that are over and above those enshrined in the UNDRIP.

Let's work together to end these disparities – to end this discrimination – because Indigenous peoples are beautiful peoples.