

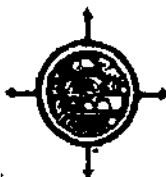
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OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Third Session
New York, 10-21, 2004
Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda
Mandated Area: Education

The UBCIC represents approximately one-third of the Indigenous communities in British Columbia. More specifically, the UBCIC represents the 50 or so communities who refuse to take part in the British Columbia Treaty Process.

The UBCIC and our member communities believe that the BC Treaty Process aims to extinguish rather than strengthen Indigenous political and territorial rights.

We refuse to enter into any negotiations conducted under this premise and maintain the position that Indigenous rights cannot and will not be surrendered.

As a result, the UBCIC and our member communities have been politically and economically marginalized with little option for redress.

The UBCIC Position: Education

Indian Control of Indian Education

- The UBCIC believes that education is a right of all Indigenous peoples, including the right to be educated in our own languages and to establish our own educational institutions.
- The UBCIC believes that local control and adequate funding are fundamental to exercising our right to education.
- UBCIC believes that Indigenous parents must have full responsibility and control of the education of their children.
- The Canadian government must adjust its policies and practices to make possible the full participation and partnership of Indigenous people in all decisions and activities connected with the education of Indigenous children.

Canada

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Canada's Obligations

- The Canadian government has assumed financial obligations for the provision of education that will ensure our survival as Indigenous peoples.
- The UBCIC has always maintained that Canada must honour these obligations to our people, until (1) our political and territorial rights are restored, together with our ability to benefit from our lands and resources; and (2) our own governance institutions are reinvigorated, including educational institutions.

Canada's Practices

- Canada merely adopts the phrase, "Indian Control of Indian Education," in its submissions to the Forum.¹
- In reality, Canadian policy reduces financial resources available for Indigenous education and transfers direct control over these resources from Indigenous communities to regional organizations.
- In British Columbia, the development of a regional educational organization is closely tied with participation in the British Columbia Treaty Process.
- Being outside the BC Treaty Process, UBCIC member communities have little or no involvement in the design, direction or evaluation of Indigenous education policies, processes and structures in British Columbia.
- As a result we have marginal access to funding and control over education and face serious marginalization.

Conclusion

The UBCIC represents British Columbia's most marginalized communities. We are politically and economically marginalized because we refuse to surrender our inherent political and territorial rights.

Canada's policies and practices do not support Canada's assertion that it "is supporting First Nations and Inuit to provide a high-quality, culturally-relevant education." Furthermore, the funnelling of education dollars through a regional body established without the participation of one-third of the Indigenous communities in British Columbia fails to "further enhance Indian Control of Indian Education."² On the contrary, this regional body assumes control from local communities and confines the discussion regarding jurisdiction over education to the BC Treaty Process.

We hope the United Nations will support us in our belief that there are viable alternatives to the BC Treaty process. To these ends the UBCIC makes the following recommendations:

- That United Nations provides support for community-based educational initiatives that exist independent of the BC Treaty Process.
- That the Forum works to establish a United Nations Justice Commission to ensure Indigenous peoples have meaningful recourse when state mechanisms such as the BC Treaty Process fail to guard against injustice.

¹ Canada. *Responses to Recommendations Made in the Report of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*. February 2004 [Para 63].

² *Ibid.*

- That the Forum works to create a mechanism within the United Nations system to assist the Canadian government in an adjustment of its policies and practices to make possible the full participation and partnership of Indigenous people in all decisions and activities connected with the education of Indigenous children

The UBCIC would like to remind United Nations member states of the importance of securing adequate financial support for the activities of the Forum in the interest of freedom, justice and peace for all peoples. Last year, Canada contributed \$9,747 to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples. In 2003, contributions to the Voluntary fund totalled \$185,162. As a result the implementation of the Forum's recommendations has been inhibited by a lack of sufficient financial resources. Canada demonstrates a similar lack of commitment to Indigenous peoples at a regional level, with similar results.