

SHAWNEE TRIBE, USA, IPO STATEMENT RE: HUMAN RIGHTS AS DELIVERED AT THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, my indigenous brothers and sisters,

Today, on behalf of the Shawnee Tribe and her people, it is my genuine privilege and honor to speak to you here, in the ancient and ancestral homelands of my relatives, the Lenape people.

To my knowledge, this is the first time the Shawnee have sent an official delegate to address a body of the United Nations, and today I appear before you to ask members of the Permanent Forum to consider adding the subject of residential schools as a discrete, distinct focus separate and apart from the human rights focal point.

The Shawnee recommendation of urgent and specific action is informed from our own experience in our efforts to have substantive consultations regarding our boarding school, the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School. For these past two years, we have encountered resistance and dissonance during our conversations when we attempt to discuss the continuing harm done to our communities. We have been told that “not all boarding schools were bad,” as some children learned a trade or how to speak English. Local, municipal authorities have stated that we not talk overly much about our missing or dead children as it harms their local fund-raising efforts. We have seen our boarding school used by the same municipal parties as a tourism attraction where visitors might purchase admission to engage in paranormal tours and conduct seances while calling upon dead Shawnee children.

I do not share these terrible things to shock you but to illustrate the pernicious intergenerational harm of reeducation camps, boarding schools, or of certain missionary efforts.

Honorable chair, excellencies, the Shawnee feel compelled to speak as world governments have not committed enough effort to encourage truth-telling and reconciliation.

It is with this urgency, we call upon the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to assign a Special Rapporteur to monitor, document, and provide a report to the Permanent Forum on status of remedy and consultation between member states and indigenous peoples. The Shawnee repeats the call for the members of the Permanent Forum to consider a new focal point on reeducation camps and schools.

Furthermore, the Shawnee insist that the members of the General Assembly return lands taken for use as indoctrination schools or camps, as well as to immediately denounce the practice of reeducation camps and the residential, boarding, and manual labor schools that have been used to separate our children and families from their languages, cultures, and traditional religions. Substantive consultation that comports with FPIC principles must be conducted by member states so we may achieve full remedy, reconciliation and truth-telling.

Niyaawe, hiini leki. (Thank you, that is all.)

Ben Barnes