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**Address to the United Nations General Assembly  
as the appointed speaker for the North American socio-cultural region at the  
UN General Assembly high level meeting marking the 10th anniversary  
of the passage of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**

**During the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations  
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)  
UN Headquarters, New York  
April 25, 2017**

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the United Nations, Distinguished Leaders and Representatives of Indigenous Nations and Peoples, *nya wenha ska nonh* (thank you for being well.) *Ska nonh* is our word for peace, and it is the same word for health. I greet you on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples of the Great Turtle Island – North America.

2017 marks my 40<sup>th</sup> year of attendance in the great halls of the United Nations, both in Geneva and New York, representing the interests and issues of our peoples and the natural world. Understanding that our tenure as the human species on this earth is completely and totally dependent upon the resources of Mother Earth. Not the least of which is water. Our mandate is inclusive of all life, the welfare of future generations and the common good. I remind you as we did in the year 2000, and again in the year 2014, that the ice continues to melt in the north. We squandered time.

The ice of course, has its own leader. And it is ultimately our leader as well. We have learned over these fifty years of interaction in these great halls about the importance of terminology. We have had to learn the very special terminology of the United Nations. Territorial integrity is one of those terminologies that reflects the confines of States. It establishes boundaries, and also ideas. I remind you again that the territorial integrity of Mother Earth binds all of us, in a much larger context.

The laws of that territorial integrity are absolute. There is no *habeas corpus*, there is no court, there is only the law. You abide, or suffer the consequences. And the consequences of that is, our human species have brought us to a point where there is a question of our survival as a species on this earth. More than a question: serious observations, dependence on discussions in these great halls. Peace is possible. Peace is here. It has always been here. Peace is within the mandates of these halls, to exercise it.

To best serve the interest of the Indigenous Peoples of North America in this short time, I must express to you our consternation, that on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are presented with “enhanced participation” purporting to “enable our participation and meetings with the UN bodies,” but the proposed procedures seem to violate most of the articles of the Declaration. In particular, our rights to self-determination; free, prior, and informed consent; consultation; and many more.

After forty years of discussion, it seems to me that we should move on. I would say that in this short time probably the most important thing we could do is move the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to a United Nations Convention. Let’s get on with it.

And so with that, on behalf of Turtle Island, North America – *Nya wenha* (I thank you). *Ska nonh* (peace). It is in this room. It’s up to you. *Dah ney’ to* (Now I am finished).