

NAFC UN PFII Statement on Item 6:

Future Work of the Permanent

Forum

April 28th, 2022

Tansi!

My name is Kelly Benning, I am a Metis woman and the President of the National Association of Friendship Centres.

For more than 50 years, Friendship Centres have provided and continue to provide culturally

relevant services by and for Indigenous peoples, living in urban areas, including rural, remote, northern, and large urban communities in the following areas:

- **Culture**, such as Indigenous language and culture revitalization;
- **Shelter and Safety**, such as housing, homelessness, child care, anti-violence, and youth;
- **Health**, such as mental health, addressing racism in health care, providing health education and provision;

- **Ongoing Community Support**, such as food security, transportation, and justice;
- **Community Development** such as, economic development, employment and training, and life skills; and
- **Education**, such as pre-school, primary and secondary alternative schooling, student support, and children's programs.

In reflecting on the topic of Item 6: Future Work of the Permanent Forum, the NAFC offers three items:

1. The Rights of Indigenous Children.

Indigenous peoples are still dealing with the intergenerational effects and aftermath of the harm caused by residential, boarding and day schools and these issues continue with the ongoing rights violations via State child welfare systems. We call on the forum to further review and consider the interconnected rights of Indigenous children

and advance the existing recommendations with respect to Indigenous children.

2. Increasing Urbanization of Indigenous Peoples. There is a large and growing urban Indigenous population and State policy and approaches need to fully consider the rights of Indigenous peoples, regardless of residency and geographic location.

Friendship Centres currently serve over a million Indigenous people every year in Canada and we have witnessed a large and growing population and demand for

Indigenous-specific supports. However, Canada has failed to properly acknowledge and adequately address the reality of increasing urbanization.

3. The effects of COVID-19 on Indigenous communities. Indigenous people were especially vulnerable during this global pandemic and there has been a lack of Indigenous specific guidance, research and analysis from international mechanisms, such as the World Health Organization. We would welcome an examination on the

effects of COVID-19 on Indigenous
communities and the effectiveness, or lack
of, State responses.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this contribution and we wish you the best in your future work.

Marsi.