

Neyawenha skannon

We greet you on behalf of the Chiefs, Clanmothers, Faithkeepers, Men, Women, Children and Children yet on the cradleboards, We greet you. I am Tadodaho, spiritual leader of the ancient confederacy known as the Haudenosaunee.

We welcome you to the North East Territories of the Great Turtle Island now known as North America.

In the ancient custom of our peoples we welcome you and prepare you for the coming meetings. We know your journey has been long and arduous. The duties you carry from your homeland weigh heavily upon you, yet you have arrived here in good health and we are pleased.

It was the great Peacemaker that came to our people a thousand years ago who instructed us on peace, equity, justice and the power of unity and the good minds. It was he who laid down for our people the Great Law of Peace we call the Gaianeñsa' go: nah, it was he who gave us the democratic principles of government by consent of the people. So it has become customary from the first days of the Great Peacemaker to greet you in this manner:

We will now wipe the dust from your eyes so that you may see clearly the work ahead.

We will now clear all obstructions from your ears so that you will hear the voices of the people and the problems that they bring.

We will now give you water to drink to clear your throat so that your voice will be strong when you speak.

We now lift the burdens and losses that you bear from your homelands from you so that you may embark on this task with a strong voice and a good mind.

With that said and your minds at rest I would like to begin our traditional thanks giving (the words before all words) as we are always grateful and mindful for all the things the creator provides.

Traditional Thanksgiving

Now on behalf of the indigenous peoples from around the world we are grateful you are here in good health. We greet you and acknowledge the leaders of the United Nations.

To his Excellency Mr. Ivan Simonovic^h; President of the Economic and Social Council, To Mrs. Mary Robinson High Commissioner for human rights, To Madame Louise Frechette Deputy Secretary General to the United Nations, To Mr. Mark Malloch Brown Administrator of the United Nations Development Program, To Ms. Anna Tibaijuka Executive Director to the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements we are grateful you are here and in good health.

To the distinguished representatives of governments attending we are grateful you are here in good health.

Your Excellency and distinguished representatives, We are here to work on the permanent forum for indigenous issues. This is a great work for peace and equity for all indigenous peoples.

It is our hope that the Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues will serve our peoples needs, that is why we are here with good minds, energy and the direction given by the peacemaker to ensure prosperity for the seventh generation yet unborn.

Mr. President, since a Cayuga Chief of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Deskaheh, attempted to speak to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland in 1923, it has taken us almost 80 years to get here. We, the Indigenous peoples, welcome this opportunity to be heard in the world family of nations as "champions of peace and progress". But peace and progress for us doesn't mean the same thing for you.

Peace and Progress for us means our right to determine our belief systems, to determine our languages, to determine our relationships with each other and with our lands and territories. It means our right to self-determination.

We have assembled here to speak on behalf of the natural world. With the current state of our Mother Earth, our fear is that you will not be able to see through the smog, hear over the noise, or be able to have a pure drink of water due to all the pollution that surrounds us.

For us to know peace and to make progress in the healing of Mother Earth, we need the Earth Charter to be ratified, We believe this charter will have the same power as the Charter on the Universal declaration on Human Rights.

**We speak for our relatives the Waters, the Fish, the Plants,
The Animals, The Trees, and all our relatives who do not have
a voice to speak:**

**To say there cannot be human rights without the rights for all
our relatives.**

**Who among us can see the future, when there is no respect for
the natural world?**

**How far have we transgressed on this path of desecration?
If we do not change the forces of nature will humble us.**

**Our Indigenous cultures foster respect, It is a common thread
that runs throughout the entire indigenous world. As the oldest
system of democracy we are built around ceremony that is why
we have responsible leadership, strong cultures, and peace.
These democratic instructions given to us by the Peacemaker
have ensured our existence for millennia.**

**We acknowledge the commitment of the United Nation's
agencies and institutions to the permanent forum and we
appreciate the coordination of the high commissioner's office
to the functions of the permanent forum that has brought us to
this moment.**

**What are some of the lessons learned in the process? First we
must have adequate resources and a budget to make the
permanent forum function effectively. We need improved
relations and communications with member states and
indigenous peoples.**

To accomplish this we need our own independent secretariat.

We need ratification without changes of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of the Worlds Indigenous Peoples. Progress for us means this will be done by the end of the Decade of the Worlds Indigenous peoples in 2004.

We need continued meetings of the working group as a forum for discussion of our various issues for Indigenous Peoples.

We need this ratification of the Earth Charter at the Johannesburg World Summit on sustainable development.

We believe there will be no peace on Earth as you continue to challenge the laws of regeneration – As the ice continues to melt

We need to improve our relationship with you, by being able to sit as Nations in the United Nation bodies, especially when the discussions concern our lives and lands. Indigenous Nations are absent from the decision making bodies of the United Nations

We would request the Secretary General to call for a World Summit of Indigenous peoples at the end of the Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples to see if things are better. We ask the International Community of Nations to use the terms "Peoples" in order to recognize our Nations as Human Beings eligible for Human Rights.

This is Our definition of progress, and we are here at the First Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues to make progress.

We offer our hand in friendship to you in our commitment to work together. There are more than 300 million of us. Our future is your future and today can be the beginning of a new relationship of respect. We can be humbled by our responsibility to each other and to the natural world. We have within us, all of us, the power of unity and the good mind. We have the ability to make progress. Only then can we speak of peace.

Da natoh.