

United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

July 12-16, 2011

Geneva, Switzerland

Native Women's Association of Canada

A Joint Statement by the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Kakisiwew Treaty Council, the Ochapowace First Nation, the Cowessess and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians.

Written Statement Concerning:

Agenda Item 3 – The opportunity for the Expert Mechanism to consider the follow-up to its report on the study on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the rights of indigenous peoples to education and No. 1 on the rights of indigenous peoples to education.

This presentation is an EMRIP update on the general circumstances of Aboriginal women in Canada and the continued right to ~~the~~ education ~~and~~ funding of Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Aboriginal Peoples are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population, with more than half the population being under the age of 25.

Aboriginal people represent 3.8% of the total population in Canada, yet we are represented by the most desperate and deplorable statistics of the Canadian population. It is extremely alarming that given the high projected youth population, youth suicide is still an urgent issue for First Nations and Inuit youth in Canada. According to Health Canada Statistics, suicide rates are still five to seven times higher for Aboriginal youth than for non-Aboriginal youth. The incarceration rate of Aboriginal people in Canada is 18% higher than the national Canadian average.

There is a housing shortage of 20,000 to 35,000 homes; a ~~short fall of 2,200 homes per year leading to unhealthy living conditions and overcrowding~~. Approximately 20,000 Aboriginal Peoples living on-reserve, do not have running water or proper sewage treatment.

Violence towards Aboriginal women <sup>or girls</sup> is still a grave concern in Canada. As of March 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada has confirmed 582 cases of missing or murdered <sup>Aboriginal girls</sup> women. In 58% of those cases, no one has been arrested or charged. The Native Women's Association continues to work on this high priority and national disgrace.

From a social and economic perspective, ~~the~~ Canadian statistics show that median income in 2006 for Aboriginal peoples overall was \$18,962, 30% lower than the rest of the Canadian population. Only 4 in 10 Aboriginal women in 2006, reported having a post-secondary education. ~~From a labour perspective, an Aboriginal woman earns only 46% of the income of a Canadian male per year.~~

15.7.2011

EM 11 P 013

EM 11 Vannet 013

start:

From a health perspective, a 2006 Health Canada Report, found that 14.5% of on-reserve Aboriginal adults reported having been diagnosed with Diabetes; 9.9% were Type 1, 78.2% were Type 2, 6.4% were women with gestational diabetes and 9.8% were pre-diabetic. Thirty seven percent of Aboriginal women reported long waiting lists. Twenty percent of Aboriginal women reported that there was no doctor or nurse available in their area. Nineteen percent reported that prior approval for services was denied and not covered under Health Canada.

The Native Women's Association of Canada and its partners in this joint submission emphasize that the above conditions are the direct result of the low socio-economic conditions, status and educational funding priority of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The statistics on Aboriginal education in Canada show that only 3 out of 10 Aboriginal children living on-reserve complete high school or 57% (McKay 2007). Aboriginal federally-funded reserve schools receive 25% to 50% less per student funding than off-reserve provincially-funded schools. Federal education funding since 1998 has been capped at 2% per year for on-reserve schools, yet funding has increased by an average of 6-7% for provincially-funded schools. On-reserve schools do not receive equal funding by the federal government to operate the full range of programs and services needed. White, Spence and Maxim (2004) note that age appropriate education success rates tend to be higher in provincial schools.

As stated, unstable social and economic conditions contribute to a higher rate of susceptibility to stranger violence and family violence for women and higher school drop out rates for Aboriginal people in general for Canada. Due to the nature of poverty in Aboriginal communities, indigenous girls from economically desperate households run the risk of dropping out of school and being forced into street activity, such as gangs and the sex trade. Education is a means to escape these conditions.

Therefore, the Native Woman's Association and its joint statement partners urge ~~the~~ Canada to:

1. Increase the level of funding of Aboriginal peoples education in Canada to levels commensurate to Canadian standard levels.
2. Increase education funding and research at all levels from early childhood education to post-secondary levels.
3. Make educational research a priority in Canada based on education research conducted for and by Aboriginal peoples in the areas of qualitative research methods and case study models which focus on successful Aboriginal educational models.

Kitchi Megwetch Mr. Chair and Members of the Expert Mechanism.