

Commission on Human Rights  
Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination  
and Protection of Minorities  
Working Group on Indigenous Populations  
Seventeenth Session  
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WCIP 99 JUN15

## **ITEM 6: HEALTH**

Thank you, Madame Chairman. It takes less time than this intervention to make the decision to destroy life, to destroy centuries of cultural richness, to disfigure the means and expressions of mental, physical, and spiritual health. The mere seconds to sign a mining contract; the mere seconds to strike a gavel affirming a vote to relocate are the curious measure of time that either can bring health or physical and spiritual degradation, and ultimately inner and societal death. How curious that the simple clarity of Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, i.e. the Right to Life, seems stunningly absent when such devastating decisions are taken by individuals, corporations or governments.

Rehab Hope Fund, Inc. has for well over a decade been profoundly concerned and engaged in efforts of education and public outreach to emphasize the importance of the promotion of health, healthy individuals and healthy societies. RHF thanks the Working Group for its serious attention given to the negative physical, psychological and spiritual implications of forced relocation and again ask that even greater steps be taken with real urgency to support the requests of the traditional Dineh peoples. RHF thanks the Working Group and United Nations for the time and actions that it has given to work towards averting what has already had blatant negative health impacts on this people in its solid stand to maintain its physical and spiritual integrity on its traditional lands. May we in expressing appreciation also renew our concern that time is becoming a serious health hazzard. Our Dineh sister spoke yesterday of February 2000 as what sounded like a presigned death certificate for her family and people. Relocation is not just a lands issue. It is a serious health issue at its deepest level as well.

What is called "preventative medicine" does not just revolve around pharmacopia. The cultural life and disciplines of individuals and societies is also key to physical and mental well-being. In Item 10b, RHF will give a fuller example of one very positive, pro-health initiative, WinSport's, World Indigenous Nations Games. An action of the mere seconds that it takes to strike the gavel to affirm it as one of the official elements of the Decade, the flurry of a signature in this case bring a prescription of life and health. Sacred traditions and wisdom for health extending through centuries must not be allow to be eroded into destructive dust through any specific times ignorance, insensitivity, or avarice. In effect, each of us is either physician or mortician. In the minutes this intervention has taken, RHF hopes that each of us has renewed our commitment to be the former. Thank you.