

WGIP 87/NAM.CAN/4

Madame Chair,

Today, we are addressing recent developements in relation to Indigenous Peoples. We, as indigenous peoples, are a patient people. We are a sharing people. I would like to share some experiences with your Group. As indigenous people become more vocal about our plights in our homelands, the colonial or colonizer governments will become more sophisticated in their attempts to suppress our people. We must be on a constant vigil. Even if the fruit looks tempting, it may be poison to our people.

We come from Canada. Our forefathers signed a treaty of sharing in 1876 with the British Crown. This was no peace treaty. We were not at war. This was no treaty of surrender—we were never conquered or defeated. It was a treaty to share our land. We own the land of Canada. We are the land owners. Canadian immigrants are merely tenants. But since 1876, the non-indian has been devising ways to get title to the land away from the Indian. Their legal system says we do not own the land. We are merely there by their grace and favor. But, we are patient. We know the truth. The Great Spirit lets us protect and care for the land. We could never sell, give or otherwise alienate the land from ourselves. We could share and we did. This must really bother the non-indian. They do not want to put in their legal system our true legal rights. Instead, they developed constitution for Canada. Like the rest of the thing the things the non-indian undertakes, this document is a failure. Indian people are not recognized. Our political rights are not protected and our political institutions are not recognized or protected. Instead section 35 of the constitution states that "existing" Treaty and Aboriginal Rights are defined. Then Canada and its legal system defines what is a treaty, they define what is an aboriginal right. It is like being invited over to our^{own} home for supper only to discover that they are serving you the dog's lunch while the Cordon Bleu is being saved for other guests. The Chiefs of Treaty 6 Alliance in the winter of 1981 and 1982 watched developments leading up to the First Ministers' Conference on Indian Issues. Indians

and indigenous peoples were being selected—only so many at the table. They were given no vote. The agenda was determined by the Governments. The place of the meeting was chosen. The chiefs and elders at that time decided to wait. No need to run to the table. If it were good, it would still be there in the future. But five years later, all can clearly see that it was a smoke and mirror show designed to appease the Indians and the world. Many may think that it is worthwhile that a National Government convenes meetings with its indigenous peoples. We do not. It takes us away from the real work of re-establishing our communities. Does anyone really believe that our communities were changed or altered because our people did not meet with the National Government? No, our people are still there surviving. But, yes our communities have changed because they stood against the colonizer, the assimilated Indians and all others who tried to push them to the meeting and said "No". That is really Indian Government in action.

No government expert can decide on what is Indian Government and its power. Because the power rest with the people. Our people practice our Government. Our meetings are in our own language, on our own lands and in our own time-frame. No external interference. This government is our ancient government since before the immigrants arrived. It is alive and thriving. This is one area that the non-indian wants to change. They want us to take Government from them. They tell us that things are not possible because there are no laws in the Canadian legal system to recognize our government. The non-indian wants everything in their terms. Our government must be developed in their model and their image.

There are a few things that bother me about non-indians developing models of self-government. How can you develop a model when the one that exists is corrupt? How can a model be developed for a people who have a totally different view of the world? It is not possible. What is possible is to respect, to share, to

understand and to honour the Indian people who so kindly agreed to share the land 100 years ago. We are a patient people. We try to wait for the non-Indian to understand our people.

We have rejected all attempts by the Federal Government to impose their system on our people. For a hundred years, there were policies of assimilation. They are still there. Only the title changes. In the 1890's, it was a policy for agrarian development of Indian communities, it is now called alternative funding opportunities for Indians. Only the words got larger because the policy is still in the 1890's. *These acts of genocide continue.*

Recently in June 1985, Canada passed legislation designating who could be an Indian. There were a lot of pat justifications including the misuse of a Human Rights Committee report. The legislation is based entirely upon the racial identification of who is an Indian. The legislation is a violation of the Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The legislation requires that communities continue the racial standards established by the legislation by having communities put in place laws for deciding who is an Indian. The chiefs and elders have rejected the application of this legislation as the legislation is contrary to our right to freely determine who are our members. The legislation undermines the international covenants as it is based upon racial identification rather than upon language, cultural and group identity. In the final analysis, the chiefs rejected any notion that they would submit their laws to the Canadian Government for approval. If the chiefs submit ^{to} ~~these~~ these laws, then there would be an admission that Canada had power over the laws of our people. This is not true and the chiefs refuse to comply. Members of the Working Group, please don't be lulled into believing that a minimum amount of selected participation in a National Scheme is any real development for the Indigenous peoples. At best, it is only a silent death rather than a noisy one. The dream of the colonizer is to silence the people that they suppress. All methods are tried.

Because we are a patient people, we have been able to observe, document and classify different methods of violations of human rights of Indians in Canada. This October, 1987, the Commonwealth Heads of Governments meeting will be held in Vancouver, ^{British Columbia}. The Treaty Six chiefs in conjunction with the Land Councils of Australia, the Maoris of New Zealand and the Anti-Slavery Society will host a three-day meeting prior to CHOGM to discuss the above mentioned topic and many others. I would like to take this opportunity, Madame Chair, to invite you and your group to attend and observe the indigenous people from within the Commonwealth discuss violations under the colonial power and their attempts to find redress. We find no redress from the Government of Canada, but find a way from our people. We wait. We share and we learn.

Thank-you, Madame Chair.