

Ainu Association of Sapporo

UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations

Seventeenth session

Item : 6. Indigenous peoples and health

26-30 July, 1999, Geneva

Thank you, Madame Chair,

In Japan, the health of the Ainu has been ignored or subjected to treatment by non-indigenous doctors and scholars who were avid and curious. The awful case we experienced was that a number of old medical charts of Ainu people were published by a Japanese scholar in the 1980s without the consent of the descendants of the patients. Now I would like to report very briefly on a serious health problem among Ainu people living in a country which has a latest of modern medical systems.

It had been said that the number of Ainu who died from leukemia was larger than that of Japanese. Some Japanese doctors had researched this question, and concluded it was just endemic. In the beginning of the 80s, discovering a virus called *Adult T-cell Leukemia virus* which is transmitted through nursing by the mother, Japanese doctors found that many Ainu were positive. The only way to avoid being infected is very simple : to stop giving breast milk to the newborn.

In conclusion, what I would like to emphasize here is that there is still no preventive measure nor information concerning this disease for Ainu people. On the other hand, Japanese doctors and scholars are continuing to study this disease. They completely forget their vocation to serve life.

WGIP 99/EAS.JPN/K