

KF 15 Kimberly Jonathan
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FEDERATION OF SASKATCHEWAN INDIAN NATIONS
INTERIM CHIEF KIMBERLY JONATHAN
STATEMENT TO UNPFII - April 21, 2015

Thank you Madame Chair. I wish to acknowledge the respected delegates, nations, leaders, and peoples that have travelled from across the world to be here today.

As Interim Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, I bring greetings on behalf of the 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan comprised of close to 150,000 Indigenous peoples.

The Federation was formed to protect and promote the Treaty and Inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and continues to advocate for full implementation of the Treaty promises that were made between Indigenous Nations and the Canadian State.

I am thankful for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as this forum is effective in giving a voice to Indigenous peoples worldwide – voices that would otherwise remain silenced by the governments and societies that oppress them. Our truths are rarely heard in media and often inaccurately portrayed, our truths are often downplayed by societies and governments whom benefit from the status quo but through this forum, our truths are heard. This UN forum shines a light on our truths, as you are doing here today, and in doing so, gives us hope and empowers our nations. It is my recommendation that this continue to be central to the objectives of this forum.

Indigenous peoples across North America are survivors of attempted genocide and cultural genocide; however, we continue to experience the impacts and the legacy of genocidal and racist policies.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to shield our children and youth from these impacts and legacies. The result is unprecedented desperation and hopelessness amongst our youth leading to some of the highest suicide rates in the world. Some of our communities have experienced youth suicide rates at approximately 800 times the rate in all of Canada.

We continue to lose our children and youth to child welfare, gangs, violence detention and jails, and in the worst of cases - suicide. Our youth are impacted by the negative legacy of colonization, residential schools, racism, bullying, loss of language and culture and most of all, a tragic loss of hope.

The Government of Canada has been funding a National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention program for which I am grateful; however, much more investments in addressing the underlying issues by both Federal and provincial governments is required to significantly impact the lives of young Indigenous people in Canada and give them a better tomorrow.

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Our communities must be fully engaged and adequately resourced in developing and implementing solutions to the despair amongst our youth so that they may grow to be the healthy, happy leaders of tomorrow that they are destined to become.

It is entirely shameful that Indigenous parents, children and youth are not afforded the same opportunities, supports and services that non-Indigenous children and youth are provided.

Through this forum, we are hopeful that our voices will be heard and that action will follow.

We- as leaders, mothers and fathers - want the very best for our children and youth. We want to be there for them before they resort to taking their own lives. We want to see the day where our children and youth are engaged and thriving. We want our children and youth to experience victory after victory in all that they do. We want our children and youth to experience lives of purpose, passion and love. May they outlive us all. Hiy hiy.