

Indigenous World Association

Organization in Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 1985

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13th session/Regional meetings of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**The impact of COVID-19 on the rights of indigenous peoples
under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**Africa/North America Regional Consultation
November 30, 2020**

**What has been the role of traditional practices and medicines
during the pandemic?**

Statement from the Indigenous World Association

Chairman,

We bring you greetings from the Chiefs, Clanmothers, men, women and children of the Haudenosaunee.

In our traditional teachings, we always begin our day or any meeting by giving thanks to all of Creation for all the gifts that they give to us. From the plants and medicines, to the small and large animals, to our fathered friends, to the creatures that swim in the waters,

To our grandfathers the four wind that bring the seasons of the earth; To our grandfathers the Thunder Beings that bring the rains that waters the earth; To Grandmother Moon who works with the women and raise the tides of the oceans; To our Eldest Brother the Sun who brings light and life to Mother Earth; To the Four Spiritual Beings who look after all peoples and life; To Ganyondyonh who received our last instructions from the Four Spiritual Beings; And finally we give our greatest thanksgiving to the Great Creator of all life and the universe; This we do before all meetings bit and small.

We are flesh, bone and blood, part of nature with the rest of the world. We have the added responsibilities of intellect and the fore knowledge of death. Every sunrise offers us the option to choose our path for the day.

Climate Change is a result of the abuse of the Natural World. COVID-19, like many diseases before it, is part of the natural world. It is something that we have experienced many times before.

While this virus is new to us, we need to use our current knowledge of natural medicines to fortify our people against the virus. The virus is a threat to all of humankind.

As part of humankind we have to find a way to coexist in the same world with the virus. It will not go away. We cannot defeat it. Treatments, and vaccines will be created by humankind so we can co-exist with the virus. Or any other virus that comes our way.

It is part of the cycle of life that evolves along with the rest of creation.

Like the rest of world, we Indigenous People will suffer as well and are suffering.

As Indigenous Peoples, we are part of humankind and must be part of the process to coexist with the virus in whatever form that may be. Either finding our own treatments and medicines or cooperating with non-Indigenous Peoples to develop vaccines and other remedies.

But let's be clear, Indigenous Peoples must be in control of the process in our Nations and communities. Any cooperation with the non-Indigenous world must be with our free, prior, and informed consent. We will survive this virus.

We will use the gift of rational thinking that creation gave to us and our own wisdom and experience to make the best decisions for our Peoples.

Together we will help to find the way for all Peoples to adjust to this New World. We offer these words as an added dimension to the discussion.

Danna tho,

Peace,

Oren R. Lyons, Onondaga Council of Chiefs
Haudenosaunee