

Te Kawau Maro
Maori organization from Aotearoa-New Zealand
21ST May 2002
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Item: 6 Education and Culture



Mr Chairman:

This intervention from Te Kawau Maro of Aotearoa- New Zealand elaborates on the issues of education and culture. I want to remind the forum of a key principle of the Permanent Forum, enunciated by the High Commissioner Mrs Mary Robertson, that of partnership, partnership in action, the operative words being partnership and action. It is assumed the partnership is equal. I wish to return to this matter but first a few comments.

Mr. Chairman some interventions have mentioned Maori development within the education and cultural context. Maori have contributed to the Global Indigenous renaissance wave and in doing so have positively changed attitudes, which could have been described as either ignorance or colonized. Maori people challenged and influenced the behavioral culture of those in our country. Although much progress has been made, Maori will tell you there is still much to be done, institutionalized racism and public Maori bashing continues within some key institutions of our country. It is no surprise that the bigger the institution the more difficult it is to change. The responsibility for reversing this process must be equally shared. The cultural renaissance by Maori people and the changes made, including the change to the dominant culture, was determinant on Maori taking back control content and delivery of Maori education and institutions. The focus of this intervention is related yet closer to this house.

Mr. Chairman, partnership and action within the United Nations is a task ahead for this forum; it is suggested that we develop these key objectives by doing a critical analysis of the culture of the United Nations and the education that underpins it. Mr. Chairman a recommendation is that the Permanent Forum directs UNESCO to carry out an educational and cultural audit of United Nations, all its institutions and staff. An audit that is effectively independent and has qualified Indigenous persons. Possibly the audit could be included in the current review regarding the UN agencies. This does not necessarily mean detailing the programs for Indigenous Peoples. It is really about asking questions such as, does the United Nations have a culture, if it does what are its key characteristics, and if it has key characteristics what and who are the major determinants, and what is the education and pedagogy influencing such culture. And therefore what are the positive and negative results and consequential effect for Indigenous Participants within the United Nations.

These questions are in the context of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues, a supposed new ground breaking institution philosophically, ideologically, culturally and politically to name a few differences. United Nations institutions recognize a certain hierarchy and subsequent behavior by its actors reinforce it, this is normal, we have seen

this, it will take time for those institutions to recognize and accommodate a change that is happening.

Why should this issue be raised, because we as Indigenous Peoples are permanently entering an institution that has, at times been difficult? At various Indigenous conferences we have heard Indigenous Peoples state the United Nations should be de-colonized. If that perspective has merit then let us do something about it. There is more than enough Indigenous expertise to assist. There is a concern that the Indigenous Permanent Forum comes under unnecessary pressure within the United Nations, this is real, not imagined.

The Permanent Forum is the new Forum for Indigenous Peoples and Member States and must be used as the United Nations example of the new partnership development, it is ground breaking, and requires a new fresh inspired approach. The Permanent Forum representatives are an example of this. All those who work for and advocate on behalf of Indigenous Peoples and the institutions that represent Indigenous Peoples must reflect the educational and cultural renaissance inspired by Indigenous peoples. These persons must have Indigenous experience and not necessarily have expertise or qualifications gained at particular Universities or particular diplomatic posts or that criteria currently determined by the United Nations..

We look forward to some elaboration on these questions and reiterate a recommendation that the Permanent Forum, emphasizing the Secretariat, be led and driven by appropriately experienced Indigenous People.

Thank-you Mr Chairman.