



STATEMENT TO THE WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

August the 4th, 1988

Adressed by: Peter Yu

National Coalition of Aboriginal Organization

WGIP 88/OCE. Aus/4

Madame Chair,

Thank you once again for allowing me to adress the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples - this time on standard setting. My statement will be brief.

In standard setting Madame Chair, it is important and imperative to establish quite immediately the premis of the debate.

The debate, Madame Chair, is about prior and continuing rights of indige-
nous people. The debate is not about economic or political concessions we
receive from settler states, is is not about positive discrimination or
affirmative action programmes that can be bestowed patronizingly on any disad-
advantaged group in a particular society. But rather it is about recog-
nizing the distinct nature and inherent rights of indigenous people as
being the first people of those lands and territories.

Madame Chair, we have never surrendered those rights.

Through the process of invasion and colonization there has been attempts
to subjugate and extinguish those rights. We have resisted and continue
to resist today.

The states legitimacy to govern all its peoples within its territories and boundaries is suspect and held in question, because they do not recognize the prior overriding existence rights of the indigenous nations and peoples, and until those rights are recognized then that legitimacy will remain in question.

It is therefore in the interest of the states to acknowledge this fundamental fact and to give legal affect to it.

The notion of First rights as first people is by no way a denial of the existing rights of other citizens, and the other rights as espoused through this admirable organ, the United Nations. However, the principles of equity, freedom and justice rings hollow through these halls and corridors, if the sincerity of these participating states is not echoed in this chamber.

Thank you, Madame Chair.