

May 14, 2004

Presentation to Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Theme: Human Rights

By: Quebec Native Women Inc.



My name is Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel, I am a citizen of the Kanien'kehaka people, the Mohawk nation, from the community of Kanehsatake, under the protection of the laws of the Iroquois Confederacy. I am the President/spokesperson of the Quebec Native Women Association who are part of the Continental Network of the Indigenous Women of the Americas.

We respectfully propose the following recommendations to the Permanent Forum:

- That Nations states be urged to respect Indigenous peoples of the Americas rights to their own citizenship and passport, as well as respecting our Sovereignty and right to self-determination.
- An investigation into the policies and legislation of all Nation states specifically Canada and the United States as well as other nation states of the Americas, that violate our fundamental human rights as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.
- We recommend an investigation by the Permanent Forum, into the military occupation of Nation States on Indigenous territories.
- We recommend that the Permanent Forum's working group provide capacity building to help Indigenous women whose face the aggravated discrimination due to our threefold condition as women, Indigenous and poor
- To implement the recommendation of the Permanent Forum's Report from their Second Session (12-23 May 2003) Paragraph 25 on the impact of Armed conflicts on Aboriginal children.
- We recommend that the P. F. put pressure on Nation states to consult with Indigenous people, when national and international laws, pacts and agreements have been agreed upon.

The Iroquois Confederacy has existed pre-European arrival on this continent. We have never surrendered our sovereignty to any Nation and our government signed treaties with European nations on how we would co-exist peacefully respecting each others culture, languages, spirituality, customs, and authority of our lands.

Today we find our sovereignty being ignored and undermined by governments such as Canada and other nations of the International community who view our issues as domestic and not worthy enough to be addressed at an international forum such as we have here today.

We are accorded the right to choose our own citizenship within the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 15: Everyone has a right to a nationality*

We have a land base, a government, a culture and language. We do not need another nation to give us the right to our citizenship. We need nation states to respect our sovereignty and not deny

our rights to it. As Iakotinonse's- Longhouse people, we ask for the support of nation states to accept our passports when we travel abroad, as I am tired of being told that I must obtain a Canadian passport.

I would like to be able to travel anywhere in the world without a demand by foreign governments to obtain a passport of imposed citizenship.

The acceptance of all Indigenous peoples' sovereignty, and the acceptance of states to our own idea of self-determination, will allow us to deal with the issues of inequality, poverty, justice, intellectual property and begin the process of capacity building in order for Indigenous people to undo the effects of colonialism.

There are two more issues that relate to the problem of undermining of Indigenous sovereignty.

Canada has long upheld policies of discrimination against Aboriginal women in its Indian Act policies designed to usurp the matrilineal roles of women. Indigenous women in Canada do not have equal rights to Indigenous men and in spite of amendments to try and rectify this situation, (re: Bill C-31 of the Indian Act) the inequality continues where Indigenous women do not have the rights to the same services as males and in some cases are not even allowed to live in their own territories. Canada is presently introducing into legislation, a policy that will further alienate Indigenous women from their communities by implementing a policy on Matrimonial property. This policy will further alienate Indigenous women from their communities by deferring to the male complete control of property when a couple divorces. QNW has been lobbying to try and stop this act of legislation from becoming law but we need the help and support of the Permanent Forum to do so.

The second example I wish to speak of concerns the community I come from.

In 1990 we were faced with an armed conflict called the "the Oka Crisis", which was a struggle over the expansion of a golf course on our un-ceded Mohawk lands. The ensuing years have found my community in turmoil with thugs taking control of the community and silencing the voices of the women in the community through threats and acts of intimidation. The government of Canada has condoned these illegal acts of violence through their silence and inaction in spite of requests from members of the community and in spite of knowledge by their authorities of illegal and criminal acts occurring in my community.

For the past 5 months, the community of Kanehsatake has been forced to live under a state of siege by members of the Mohawk nation who have become assimilated through the assimilation policies of the Indian Act that have destroyed our social, spiritual and moral fabric. It has undermined our sovereignty. The state of siege began with the burning of the head band council chief's house in January. What we witnessed as a people, is the end product of colonialism.

I would therefore like to refer you to Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations that:

*Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person*

In conclusion, as the spokesperson for the Quebec Native Women Association, I support the Declaration of the Indigenous Women ~~Caucus~~ and the E.N.L.A.C.E. declaration. I thank the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for the opportunity for the voice of Indigenous women to be heard.

Skén:nen – In Peace

*Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas*