

SACHIGO LAKE

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Commission on Human Rights
Sub-commission on the Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Peoples
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Agenda Item 4: Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Oral intervention by Chief Alvin Beardy, Sachigo Lake Treaty 9 Territory Great Turtle Island

Madam Chair,

I am honoured to extend greetings from the Indigenous Peoples of "Achigo" which in my language means "where rivers meet". "Achigo" is situated on Great Turtle Island otherwise known Indigenous America. As Chief, I was sent here by my Elders and Grandmothers to defend our rights to our traditional lands, territories and resources.

My Peoples have great love, respect, gratitude and reverence for the land and its abundant resources. We honor the Creator and give thanks on a daily basis for the gift of our land and our life. We know the land sustains all living things and we are dependent on its life force. We acknowledge and accept that we have a responsibility to protect and preserve the land for our children and our children's children. We have never surrendered, relinquished, extinguished or otherwise consented to give up our lands and territories. The land and the Peoples are one forever.

In violation of the our traditional laws, our territory has been defined by man-made boundaries imposed by the state of Canada. The colonizers have tried to impose imaginary borders but these borders cannot define our lands. The arrival of foreign settlers in our lands has changed our nomadic lifestyle. We are forced to live on small tracts of land known as "Indian reserves" as the colonizers imposed their system on our territories and our Peoples. But, these systems have not changed our relationship with or our responsibility towards our lands and territories.

In our territory, our family groups and clans maintain and uphold the protocols amongst our clans on the use of the lands and its resources. We are instructed by our Elders to live with the land in harmony according to the original instructions given to our Peoples by Manitou Otonochikawin. This is the First Law of the Land. We are sovereign nations with exclusive jurisdiction over our water, land, territories, resources and Peoples according to our own laws.

Our Nations negotiated and concluded Treaty Nine with the British Crown in 1905 and 1906. As successor, Canada claims that we surrendered the right to our lands. But our grandfathers entered into a peace and friendship treaty with the Crown. This contradiction is addressed in the study on Treaties and we will say more about this under the relevant item.

At this point, we wish to inform the Working Group about initiatives taken by the municipal government of Ontario in violation of our Treaty. These initiatives are called "Lands for Life" and "Ontario's Living Legacy and Forest Accord". They are a public consultation and land use planning process within our territory. These initiatives were undertaken without consulting properly with

us, and without seeking our informed consent. Ontario continues to plan unilaterally for development in our territory. This process is designed primarily to benefit multinational corporations and special interest groups wanting to exploit our resources.

These initiatives by the municipal government of Ontario will jeopardize our lands and resources. They will diminish and eventually extinguish our inherent land rights

My Elders and Grandmothers have instructed me to voice their message to the Working Group. My voice will echo their message before the United Nations. *They say: "We will never consent to break our sacred relationship with the land and the Creator. This is our First Law as the Peoples of Achiga. Canada and the municipal government of Ontario are pushing us to break with our First Law. They are depriving our children and the children yet to be born. We cannot and will not allow this to happen."*

Thank you, Madam Chair