

International Treaty 4 Secretariat

**Commission on Human Rights
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Populations 17th Session July 26-30, 1999**

Item 5: Indigenous Peoples and Their Relationship To Land

Madame Chair, I have the honour of presenting a brief statement to the members of the Working Group. On behalf of my people and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, thank you for this opportunity.

On December 04, 1998 the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights considered and studied Canada's third periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; This Committee concluded several observations and recommended action to be taken before the next report is to be forwarded by the Government of Canada. Directly pertaining to this agenda item, and I quote "the Committee views with concern the direct connection between aboriginal economic marginalization and the ongoing dispossession of aboriginal people from their lands, as recognised by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and endorses the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that policies which violate aboriginal and treaty obligations and extinguishment, conversion or giving up of aboriginal rights and title should on no account be pursued by the State Party. Certainty of treaty relations alone cannot justify such policies."

In addition, on April 07, 1999 the UN Human Rights Committee considered and studied Canada's fourth periodic report, on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, this Committee also concluded several observations including the non-implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. With direct reference to the conclusion "that without a greater share of lands and resources institutions of self-government will fail, the Committee also emphasized that the right of self-determination requires inter alia, that all peoples must be able to freely dispose their natural wealth and resources and that they may not be deprived of their means of subsistence".

Further Madame Speaker, the greatly anticipated progress report on Indigenous Peoples and their relationship to Land study will be much welcomed and we thank you for this immense effort to date. We view the preliminary observations, consistent with many of our basic positions including; that Indigenous Peoples around the World have been in the past and continue to be subject to discriminatory laws related to the extinguishment of their inherent Indigenous land rights.

Madame Chair, concerning the statement given to this audience by the delegation of Canada regarding the "Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan" the issue of land and their direct relationship to treaty and inherent rights was absent from their statement to this Working Group. Your study combined with the observations and recommendations of the UN Treaty Bodies previously mentioned should serve as an impetus for Canada to fully implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and to consider the rights of our peoples through a process that honours our international treaties and treaty rights to land.

On behalf of my people and the organizations I represent Thank you. Meegwetch.

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