

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

Working Group on Indigenous Peoples

Twentieth session

22-26 July 2002



ORAL STATEMENT FROM THE RED NATION OF TURTLE ISLAND

Adelard Blackman

Mr. Chairman,

Greetings to all Indigenous Peoples of the World, State Members, NGOs and organisations.

My name is Adelard Blackman and I am part of the Dene Sulene Nation in Northern Canada, and I speak as a part of that Nation.

At this time I wish to bring before the WGIP certain points in regards to the issue of development on reserves.

In the past year, since my last statement here at the WGIP, we have undertaken an investigation, with the help of observers from Incomindios, into issues regarding our people.

Here are our observations and analyses of some of these issues.

- Massive corruption from the top down by the federal government, provincial governments and multinationals within our territory.
- Government policies and legislation that infringe on our treaty rights ensuring that as treaty Indians, we will be extinct within 100 years and our reserves will be gone.
- Multinational corporations taking everything without consideration for our traditions and our values.
- Massive housing shortages, critical health care issues, funding cuts to education, ... the list goes on.

Any move towards self-determination is blocked by the government

Self-government forced on us by the federal government is doomed to failure.

How can we determine our own future if we do not have an economic base and a healthy community?

The Buffalo River Dene Nation just lost a case at the Supreme Court Level in April 2002 : The Sylvester/Caterack vs the Queen, for hunting within our traditional territory. We have exhausted all legal measures within the Canadian legal system. Now we have only one alternative left, and that is the international arena.

Our backs are up against the wall and we do not like it.

We must bring to the attention of the international community that we must have justice and restitution for our people.

Is there a solution? Yes, if and when the federal government and the multinational companies apologise and admit that they have done wrong in the treatment of our Indigenous Peoples, then, and only then, we will begin reconciliation and move to a solution that will be beneficial to all peoples.

Are we going to get an apology? I don't think so, when we all know that the almighty dollar controls. But then again, stranger things have happened.

With the WGIP, this avenue must remain open for our Indigenous Peoples, this is our last avenue for bringing the truth into the open.

The Permanent Forum must be taken care of, and adequate funding must be in place immediately.

The Draft Declaration must pass as is, as originally drafted, with no changes. The international community must begin to understand that we must be treated with respect and dignity.

I'm closing, Mr. Chairman.

Our people are becoming more and more educated, we are beginning to understand the difference between what is right and what is wrong. The governments and the multinational corporations must understand that the time of taking from us is over. You will have to deal with us in an honest and open dialogue.

I give you a quote by one of our elders, and I quote :

'We must all work together as human beings for something positive, otherwise Mother Earth will be no longer able to sustain us within the next 100 years'

...and off quote.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as Indigenous Peoples, we have a lot to offer to the world if you listen to what we have to say. Solutions can be found, let us not leave it until it is too late.