

International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development

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Economic and Social Council

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Peoples
Seventeenth Session, 26-30 July 1999
United Nations, Geneva

RE: AGENDA ITEM 6. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES and HEALTH

Thank you. This is a joint statement on behalf of I.O.I.R.D., the Four Cree Nations of Hobbema, the National Aboriginal Diabetes Association in Canada, and WIN Sports, Incorporated. Madam Chairperson, we presented an intervention last year on this epidemic situation among the Indigenous Peoples regarding diabetes.

There are two issues we want to address:

1. At a meeting with the Director General of the World Health Organization, Mrs. Gro Harlem Bruntland, last month in Geneva we re-stated the call for a World Conference on Indigenous Health, to include matters like Diabetes and measures for Preventive Health. It has come to our attention that not only are approximately 2/3 of the Aboriginal peoples diagnosed with diabetes, women, but, that Type 2 diabetes, or, non-insulin dependant diabetes mellitus is rapidly increasing among Indigenous youth. In recent years, adult-onset has been diagnosed in Indigenous children as young as 5 to 8 years of age.

Perhaps a recent article is relevant (Edmonton Journal, Tuesday October 13/98) to this predicament and I quote: "Canada may top the United Nations list for the highest quality of life in the world, but a new government study shows what the ranking hides-aboriginals living on Reserves fall far down in the pack, with a ranking worse than Mexico and Thailand. The study by the Department of Indian Affairs says the quality for on-reserve natives...is on par with Brazil and countries considered to have only a medium level of human development...This is the first time Indian Affairs has applied native-specific statistics to the human development index created by the UN to compare the world's countries...Canada has topped the list for the past six years. But among the 173 countries ranked...the Indian Affairs study says...on Reserve natives rank about 63rd." Some argue also that the diabetes rate could be linked to our environment, the changed air we breath and new adopted diets. We would recommend through you, Madam Chairperson, when the WHO consultations occur this November that the National Aboriginal Diabetes Association in Canada be one of those parties consulted to bring expertise to a very serious health epidemic.

2. Madam Chairperson, we also know diabetes can be prevented. We would call on all relevant agencies to increase resources for more preventative programs and information. Eating healthy foods, being physically active and having a positive attitude, are merely three (3) ways that have been identified to prevent or control diabetes. These are also, coincidentally, three (3) elements that WIN Sports, Incorporated, promotes through its encouragement of Indigenous Peoples to exercise and to participate in sports and recreation. With a positive healthy spirit, mind and body - all Indigenous Peoples can WIN. Thank you

Willie Littlechild, Q.C., Helen Littlechild, RN, Tara Currie, VP WIN Sports, Jennifer Sewepagaham, International Intern. (Victor Buffalo, NADA Executive)

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