



# HAUDENOSAUNEE

MOHAWK - ONEIDA - ONONDAGA - CAYUGA - SENECA - TUSCARORA  
ONONDAGA NATION - VIA BOX 319-B NEDROW NEW YORK 13120

doCip  
ARCHIVES

WGIP 87/NAM.USA/4

UNITED NATIONS  
WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS  
FIFTH SESSION, AUGUST 1987  
GENEVA

UNITED NATIONS  
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND  
AUGUST 5, 1987

Madam Daez, Chairperson of the Working Group. Members of the Working Group - attending NGO's. Representatives of interested nations and fellow representatives of indigenous nations, I bring greetings from the Haudensaunee. We are the people delegated to represent our nation's voice in the Forum. We present our credentials of delegated authority this wampum, symbol of all that our nation encompasses, our laws, our history, our people, and our lands.

With great respect for this forum and for all the representatives here we bring greetings from the chiefs, clan mothers, faith keepers, the men and women without titles, our children sunning about and even those on the cradle board we bring greetings and good wishes from them to all of you, your chiefs, your clan mothers, your faith keepers, your men, your women, your children, even to those upon the cradle boards we greet you.

We were participants of the first meeting of indigenous people sponsored by the NGO's on racial discrimination and human rights were at the Palais De Nations, Geneva 1977. That was a great moment in the history of the indigenous people of the western hemisphere. We came here with one mind, one body, and one heart. We came here to present our peoples rightful place in the community of human beings. We came here with this understanding that we possessed sovereign rights of nationhood. We came here with leaders of indigenous nations that understood the principles of peace, equity, and the power of the good minds. We came here under the authority of Soohm Gwyah Dee Sah Eh the ultimate force that governs all life upon this planet, we call Mother Earth. We came as one, with the purpose to protect the seventh generation yet unborn and to seek peace for our people.

The history of the Haudensaunee is shrouded in time we are indigenous to the Great Turtle Island, called North America. Long before the coming of the white man we enjoyed communities of peaceful coexistence, there was an

abundance of game, the three sisters corn, beans and squash sustained us, and the springs, rivers, and lakes all had crystal clear water for us to drink.

We have a government with a Constitution based upon peace and justice. \* We enjoyed lands as far as the eye could see and we shared those lands with all life. We were free people who understood and cherished freedom as an inherent right of every human being. We lived in peace under the authority of the chiefs who upheld the great spiritual law of peace, and who yearned only for the health and well being of the people.

We lived in harmony with life and nature carrying out this thanksgiving ceremony that governed our lives.

Now our brother and his people came across the sea from the East and we were discovered though we were never lost. It was this curious reasoning that he brought with him. And he said that he was manifested by God to rule the destinies of our people. We saw that his religion killed and that he brought in unquenchable thirst for land and natural resources. Gold was as deadly a killer of our people as the small pox that he also carried with him.

Up to this time great nations spanned the Continent of North, Central and South America, each with language, culture, and governments of democracy, based upon the great spiritual law. And up to this time, we determined for ourselves the direction of our lives and of our nations.

And so at the time of Columbus's landfall in the Americas, self-determination was an ancient concept. We tried to accommodate him, and treaties were made and broken. Great debates raged in Portugal, Spain, and the Old World concerning us and questioned if we were human beings. So, the white man prospered in our lands, he even imported people from Africa and other places as slaves to do his work in the New World and they suffered along with us.

As he grew in size and power he diminished our lands and decimated our people and yet we tried to accommodate with transferences of lands through

treaties of cessions we sat as nations and struck treaties on behalf of our peoples. Felix Cohen recognized authority of Indian law of the United States said : "... We recognize that our Indian law originated, and can still be most clearly grouped as a branch of International Law, and that in the field of International Law the basic concepts of modern doctrine were all hammered out by the Spanish Theological Jurists..." Cohen recognized the international status of our Nations.

Yet land was the issue and the natural resources of those lands motivated great thrusts of land clearings of both trees and people by the white man. Displacement of indigenous people became necessary in order to exploit the resources of those lands. All of the indigenous peoples of the world have felt the inhumanity of this displacement and it continues up to this moment.

The indigenous peoples and Nations of this world have suffered, in some degree, forced removals, forced assimilation, ethnocide and genocide. It is our history, but it is also here today, oppressions may have changed but our suffering remains the same.

The question here is what are we going to do about this, and is there a reason to support our survival. We will answer yes. Indigenous peoples have contributed much to the development of civilization. The Haudenosaunee and many other Indian nations of North America helped and guided the founding fathers of the United States in the development of a democratic government. Indian and indigenous Nations gave the great concept of individual freedom with free and democratic societies, we gave great agricultural knowledge, medicines, abstract concepts, mathematics, with great knowledge of the Heavens.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the United States said : "The whole object is one of enlarged humanities. It's completion is conceived to be due not only to the Aborigines, as our predecessors in occupation of the Continent, to which their footsteps have been providentially led, but as a cosmic element in the history of the human race..."

This point that we are making here is that all contribute to life and the integrity of Mother Earth.

As conquest and imperialism cast great shadows across North, Central and South America, self serving doctrines of acquisition and power were being developed and refined. The Doctrine of Discovery ostensibly delegated indigenous peoples and nations to flora and fauna of "discovered" lands. The doctrine of Manifest Destiny subjugated every one not Christian and the property to the control of Christians whomever, and wherever they might be.

In U.S. case law, the Plenary Power Doctrine evolved without passage of law, or benefit of congressional act, or consent of the Indian nations affected. This doctrine gives the Congress of the United States the power to legislate over all aspects of Indian relations and their lives. It is a naked exercise of power over Indians that includes the power to abrogate treaties, to seize Indian lands, and to destroy the self government of Indian Nations and there is no legal resource against this exercise of power. This of course is contrary to the political intent of the current draft resolution of the Declaration of Principles presented to the Working Group.

We now arrive at why we are here; to declare for ourselves the terms of self-determination as an indigenous Nation, and to help with the drafting of the Declaration of Principles for this Working Group.

It is clear to us that the term self determination is self evident and what political stance we choose for ourselves is our right and we declare sovereignty as opposed to autonomy ! That was the intention of the original delegation that came to the Great Forum in 1977.

We have some suggestions, observations and concerns towards the seven principles drafted by the Working Group. It was noted by the Government of Canada that new standards may be needed to deal specifically with the requirements of indigenous peoples and their governments. Our concern is that if new standards are developed that they are consistent with current principles drafted by the indigenous Nations and, their legal advisors should participate directly in the development of the new standards to insure equal force with international standards and compliance with social, cultural, political, and spiritual realities of indigenous peoples and

Nations today.

Cultural assimilation is another of our concerns. The intolerance of the dominating cultures of states toward indigenous peoples and Nations is rooted in the fact that in most cases, primary ownership or aboriginal title and all of the natural resources therein, resides with the aboriginal peoples of those lands. Cultural assimilation becomes a process to change the identity of indigenous peoples and Nations. It becomes a tool to remove Aboriginal people and title from these lands. Often this process is too slow for some States and more direct force is applied to either coerce and sometimes terrorize indigenous peoples into submission. If this fails, then a "military solution" may be advocated resulting in genocide.

Education should be a celebration of ones people culture, heritage, and Nation and how you fit in with the rest of the world. Education should be an experience of enlightenment that lifts the spirit of the people and inspires them to secure the future of the coming generations. In setting standards for education of indigenous people and Nations, care must be taken that it is not a reflection of the dominate culture and state that may surround them. Education should be an enhancement of their culture and societies. Forced education by the dominant society of their language and their culture becomes dogma and inturn creates resentment and rebellion. On the other hand pride and hope create the desire and will to learn and in turn becomes the discipline of life.

We will mention at the time the ILO's revision of convention No. 107. This is important because it recognizes a fundamental change in attitude towards indigenous peoples and Nations. Although it must be pointed out that in the resolution of the Preparatory Meeting of last week that the current language of the revision is grossly inadequate in the protection of land rights and fails to protect the process of self determination.

Madame Daez, we now bring our statement to a close with a question to whom may hear. From whence does authority flow? Who first established the principles of peace and freedom? Does it flow from the great assembly of the United Nations? That cannot be because these principles were here even before then. It seems to us that from the earliest times, man's

natural state was to be free as our grandfathers told us we believe that freedom is inherent to life, We recognized this principle as the key to peace, respect for one another, and the understanding of the natural law that prevails over all the universe and adherence to these laws is the only salvation of our future on the planet, Mother Earth.

Madame Daez, members of the Working Group, representative of all Nations, we thank you.