

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
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Item 3(c) (continued): Youth, Self-Harm and Suicide  
21 April 2015

Joint Statement by International Organization for Self-Determination and Equality (IOSDE),  
Winnemem Wintu Tribe, Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples

We honor the traditional territories of the Lenape Nation and Onondaga Peoples here today.

We are concerned about the effects on Indigenous youth and children of the ongoing suicide, self-harm and violence resulting from the desecration and destruction of Indigenous sacred sites and thus traditional political, legal, and medicinal practices that Indigenous youth and children flourish from and have right to live with in peace and dignity with as living culture. Along these same lines we are concerned about the effects on Indigenous youth and children of unresolved claims to the right of self-determination and decolonization, including territorial and political independence and sovereignty, and the lack of recognition of peoples as legal, self-governing peoples and nations equal to States.

For Indigenous youth to have access to their cultures as per international law, the territorial integrity of indigenous lands and in particular sacred sites must be recognized alongside Indigenous self-governance and legal traditions therein. Indigenous youth amazingly and brilliantly but unfairly shoulder burdens of structural inequalities and injustices against traditional Indigenous leaderships and legal processes. To force Indigenous children and youth to live amidst the oppressing of their own cultural systems and traditions as well as the destruction of their familial and communal sacred places and practices is to spiritually and culturally displace them. We want peaceful lives for Indigenous youth and children, where they do not feel they must go to battle for even our most basic fundamental rights, but where they can enjoy, share and experience those rights in action, such as rights including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 30 as also referenced in the UNDRIP Preamble.

Self-harm is not the only form of violence Indigenous youth face; the disappearance of youth in the face of State and business land-grabbing, dividing of peoples by imposed borders and laws, discrimination and systematic terrorizing and criminalization of Indigenous communities are also harms and violence to Indigenous youth. We do not want yet another generation of Indigenous youth and children to grow up in a world where their own tribe's and people's Indigenous cultural, spiritual, political and legal traditions are strategically placed in conflict and or manufactured submissiveness and/or dependence with the traditions and systems of colonizing or managing State(s).

Indigenous Peoples live daily with the reality of the colonizing of traditional territories that has not yet been acknowledged and addressed formally by the UN Decolonization Committee, Trusteeship Council or States. Colonization such as through what is called settler colonization or contiguous land base colonization, and not only blue/salt water colonialism, further destroys Indigenous sacred lands and the

abilities therein to pass on Indigenous cultures as living, breathing systems. We call for speedy resolution to these inequalities and injustices for the healthy futures of our youth and children. In this we reference UNDRIP Articles 7(2), 8, 11, 12 and 22, where it is imperative to the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health of youth and children that Indigenous sacred places and own traditional and just cultural institutions of law and governance be recognized, utilized, and included equally in international and UN procedures, actions, creations and mechanisms.

Self-determination is not self-determination if it does not rest in and come from the hands, minds and hearts of the peoples themselves and their own decision-making processes. It is not for States to determine who is and is not Indigenous, as in the United States Federal Recognition system, while tribes such as the Winnemem Wintu and Chief Caleen Sisk are left defending the survival of their sacred sites to be able to continue young women's ceremonies and traditions for future generations and cultural survival of the tribe. The tribe faces cultural genocide every time it merely practices traditional ceremonies, as the United States has laws against these practices and the tribe continually faces penalties by breaking the U.S. laws. Such State laws do not include Indigenous Peoples' Rights; the Winnemem and other "unrecognized" tribes are categorized as without rights, as invisible people, ignoring that they are in fact are historic California Treaty tribes and must endure such discrimination.

UN General Assembly Resolution 1803 (XVII), on *Permanent sovereignty over natural resources*, states that "violation of the rights of peoples and nations to sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources is contrary to the spirit and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and hinders the development of international co-operation and the maintenance of peace", acknowledging in the same Resolution that liberation movements are legally legitimate and youth shall be raised with a knowledge of dignity and equality in respect for the right of peoples to self-determination. Moreover, the General Assembly included the following principle in the *'Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples'* (Resolution 2037 (XX) of 7 December 1965), Principle III: "Young people shall be brought up in the knowledge of the dignity and equality of all men, without distinction as to race, colour, ethnic origins or beliefs, and in respect for fundamental human rights and for the right of peoples to self-determination."

In the section *"Implementation of United Nations resolutions relating to the right of peoples under colonial and alien domination to self-determination"* of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 27th session report, 1971, it is stated: "Believing that effective application of the principle of self-determination of peoples is the essential basis for recognition and observance of human rights and that self-determination means that all peoples have the right freely to determine their political status without external interference..." In this vein, it must be that peoples themselves, including indigenous peoples, can define their own meanings of self-determination. As well, Indigenous Peoples must have the right to submit to the Trusteeship Council, if desired, own claims as non-self-governing territories for UN Decolonization without State interference, for assurance of cultural integrity and the peace, dignity and security of our sacred places, youth, women and children, and not be strategically labelled rebels, separatists, criminals, terrorists, anti nationals or any other such automatically negative connotations to blocked their seeking of dialogues and change in the context of true human rights due for actualized peace, dignity and self-determination and justice.

We recommend that Indigenous youth be supported by the UN and its bodies and mechanisms to create their own study on and exploration into the ways in which all of the many diverse Indigenous Peoples of the world have work for and achieve self-determination, political, legal and territorial decolonization, and the continuation of traditional Indigenous healing, leadership and own Indigenous justice processes via protect of own sacred places.