

16<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE RIGHT OF INDI. GENOUS  
PEOPLES

Agenda Item 8: Treaty Study

July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1998

Ed Burnstick, Paul Nakoda Nation and Elder Joe Potts, Alexis Nakoda Nation

**Aboastitch**

On the behalf of our spiritual and traditional elders and our leadership, we would like to express our greetings to the members of the Working Group, state members, and also our indigenous brothers and sisters from throughout Mother Earth, also to people who are interested in indigenous peoples.

Today we are making a joint statement. I have an elder, Joe Potts, from the Alexis Nakoda Nation with me and myself representing the Paul Nakoda Nation. The Nakoda people of these two communities come from central Alberta, Canada. They, in 1876, signed the adesion to Treaty Six at Fort Edmonton. Since that time, we have had the understanding that treaty was signed with Queen Victoria of Great Britain. Now!!!; their understandings and the treaty promises that were made at that time, our elders understood these very well. And even today, they can express them orally.

Madame Chairman, it has been a long road in dealing with our treaties. It goes back to 1974 at the Treaty Conference in Mobridge, South Dakota, where the elders from 98 different indigenous nations gave the approval to begin the work towards the international community. From Mobridge we were able to get the first NGO conference in 1977 and again in 1981.

Many of the things that have happened within Canada in regards to treaties, we look at how the Canadian government has abused its administrative responsibility to our people, the Nakoda people. Even today, there are modern day treaty violations. They use policies or legislations that are put in place without the consent of our people.

The understandings in Treaty Six are very clear to our people. But somehow the Canadian government and even the Crown has forgotten those understandings.

We would like to thank Professor Alfonso Martinez and his assistant Isabel Shuite Tewchoff for their work in the Treaty Study. From my understanding, that they have put a lot of time and effort into putting this Treaty Study together and also making the recommendations. For us as Nakoda people, it is very difficult to come to this forum on a yearly basis. We live in very poor communities. We do not have monies, or do not have access to monies to come here annually.

However, the Treaty Study has given us hope that in the recommendations that Mr. Alfonso Martinez has given will build a framework to be able to address those treaty promises or understandings that we had back in 1876.

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Since the final report and recommendations are only in English, we would like to support our brothers and sisters in South America and Central America and other places that this item be brought to the next Working Group for full discussion on the floor of the next Working Group. We feel that we as Nakoda people would have to take this report and recommendations back to our people for full review.

It is hoped by our people that this report and recommendations would lead to a more meaningful discussion at this level of the United Nations. As Nakoda people we have had our meetings in regards to the Treaty Study, we have our understandings of the Treaty Study. And hopefully our elders and traditional people will be here next year to be able to participate in full discussion in regards to the Report and the Study.

I thank you Madame Chairman.

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