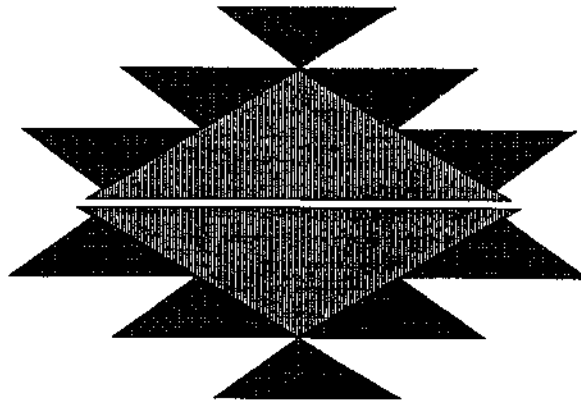


TETON SIOUX NATION TREATY COUNCIL

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*XIth Session of the Working Group on
Indigenous Populations*

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I am Burdell Blue Arm of the Teton Sioux Nation Treaty Council. I have traveled here to the United Nations for the first time from Cherry Creek on the Cheyenne River reservation in South Dakota in order to ensure that the issues which are important to the people I represent at home are included in the Draft Declaration. It is therefore important to me that I be able to tell them that a place has been made in the Declaration that will permit the Lakota Nation to have the story of its treaties told. The story cannot be told if the Declaration is diluted and contrary to a fair hearing in a neutral setting. The Teton Sioux Nation Treaty Council sincerely hopes that the final language of the Draft Declaration will ensure that a fair and impartial international forum, for treaty issues, will be guaranteed. For many generations we have pursued a trail of justice through the systems of the United States government and courts which has resulted in neither justice nor enforcement. We view the United Nations as our last hope and are now looking to this body, the Commission for Human Rights and the General Assembly for a fair hearing. We wholeheartedly support the idea, as stated by Chief Oren Lyons of the Haudenosaunee, for a "forum and a process for dispute resolution between Indigenous Peoples and nations."

Of equal importance is the creation of a permanent place within the United Nations for Indigenous Peoples. To our people back home the establishment of a place for us within the United Nations is of crucial importance and I am therefore committed to advocacy on their behalf. We are not so inexperienced as to assume that the Draft Declaration, in which we have had a voice, will guarantee our rights if there is not some forum in which we can continue to voice our opinions and the opinions of our peoples back home. We also support Chief Lyons' recommendations for the development of a permanent "Working Group on Indigenous Peoples", a high commission for Indigenous Peoples and funding for these bodies. An important means of expressing the commitment of the United Nations would be an International Decade. It would give our peoples a chance to learn of the work of the United Nations and Indigenous Peoples and the future that is hoped for for our children and our children's children.

Thank you Madame Chairperson and delegates of this Assembly for listening to me. I hope that the Draft Declaration that we have worked so long and hard for is not the end, but the beginning of the process for Indigenous Peoples. Through open communication between all the Peoples of the world, we hope that we can return to the Natural Laws of the Creator, which govern our Nations, and find peace for everyone.