

3/10/2016 10:10/10

National Indian Youth Council Submission:
Sixth Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

DISCOVERY, COLONIALISM, URBANIZATION AND NEGLECTED PEOPLES

Yateeh...greeting from Dine' Nation. Thank you Mr. Chair for this opportunity to present our views. *related to item 6.*

The National Indian Youth Council wants to make special mention of a major issue in the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Indigenous Forum correctly focused on the problem inherent in the "Doctrine of Discovery" as a notion that fuels denials of indigenous human rights. It is also important to get beyond the incorrectness of the doctrine (~~that was actually considered to be flawed at the time it was announced and defended~~) and squarely address one of the major effects of colonialism in most parts of the world—urbanization.

When the United States policy drove the making of treaties with Indian tribes and groups through 1871 (when Indian treaty-making ceased) and the end result of the policy was the Indian Claims Commission to buy Indian rights at a bargain-basement price, there was a conscious colonial motivation of pushing Indians off the land so settlers could occupy it. ~~Much the same thing happened with Native Hawaiians and other indigenous groups, and we DO need to recall the internment of Japanese during World War II a similarly racially-motivated policy.~~

The United States was a rural nation through the end of the nineteenth century and it is now a largely urban country. The statistics show that 75% of all persons who are classified as American Indian or Alaska Native live outside Indian areas, places we call "Indian Country." Despite that fact, the United States continues to maintain ~~only~~^{only} an "Indian policy," without regard to the indigenous peoples within the country, and that policy is geared to Indian tribes that

maintain reservations. Only Indians who live on a reservation are the subjects of policies in favor of indigenous persons, and that excludes most indigenous groups, Indian tribes that are not "recognized," people who do not live in an "Indian area," 75% of the American Indian population and of course non-governmental organizations such as ours. United States Indian policy has no room for the expression of opinions in participation by ^{many} Indian organizations such as ours. We have been a national presence for over fifty years but we still are not invited to the table. ~~When we do try to attend we must wait out in the alley in hopes of hearing something through an open window.~~

Urbanization is a fact of modern economy across the globe and it is essential that we recognize that colonial effect when discussing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration honors the rights of indigenous individuals, as individuals, and the rights of indigenous groups, but we forget that it also protects persons who were the subjects of urbanization policies, those who live in urban or off-reservation areas, and their organizations. The Expert Mechanism should note that and stress the fact that urbanized indigenous individuals and groups are ^{heard and are} protected.

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