

Catherine Thunderbird of the Coast Salish Nation of British  
Canada  
To The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
General Statements  
Friday May 17, 2002

Mr. Chairman, Panel, Brothers and Sisters. My name is  
Catherine Thunderbird. I am from the Coast Salish Nation  
of British Canada and <sup>Columbia</sup> now reside in ~~the~~ New York. I am a  
~~consultant~~ <sup>member</sup> ~~as an~~ <sup>&</sup> Elder <sup>at</sup> to the A.I.C. House in which I have  
been a member for 25 years. *My message is short but so*

Many issues have been addressed <sup>about</sup> ~~from~~ the environment,  
land theft, health issues and other atrocities that is  
effecting my Indigenous Brothers and Sisters around the  
world. All <sup>these</sup> issues are of importance, but at this time I  
would like to turn your attention to the most important  
issue, which is, " The stopping of any and all adoptions of  
Indigenous Children to Peoples outside of their culture."  
I myself attended a boarding school and was taken from my  
cultural environment. This caused me to assimilate into a  
western thinking system that caused me to loose my cultural  
values and language as a youth. The assimilated system did  
not teach me or make me aware of my ethnicity, but on the  
contrary taught me only the negative aspects of my Peoples.  
The colonizer had raped both my mind and my spirit, it *tried to*  
destroyed my self-esteem and for most who lived the same as

I, it has caused devastating effects on the life one leads.  
All this mentioned above is plain genocide to the  
Indigenous Peoples way of life.

32 years ago I started on my path back to my heritage.  
I would like to see a way for this panel to work on the  
issues stated previous on the adoption of Indigenous  
Children. I hope that this forum can see to it that our  
children have a future within their cultural and Indigenous  
system and that they are raised knowing their language and  
the way of their Peoples. The children are our future and  
without them life will be no more. Thank you Mr. Chair and  
members of the Forum.