

MEMBER RESERVATIONS

Pine Ridge
Lower Brule
Cheyenne River
Standing Rock
Rosebud
Fort Peck
Crow Creek
Santee
Canadian Sioux

ITEM 4

Intervention of the Tetuwan Oyate, Teton Sioux Nation Treaty Council
delivered by Kent Lebsock
on behalf of the Grassroots Oglala Lakota Oyate

Commission on Human Rights--Subcommission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights
XIVth Session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations
United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland July 23 – 27, 2001

Thank you Madam Chairperson. My name is Kent Lebsock and the name given to me by my people is Tetuwan Okshila. I am speaking on behalf of the Tetuwan Oyate, Teton Sioux Nation Treaty Council.

This year the Working Group on Indigenous Populations has selected Indigenous Peoples and Their Right to Development as its theme. Under the Natural Law, which governs the traditional Lakota people of the Tetuwan Oyate, development is not limited to economics. It, like all issues related to the survival of our people, is dependent upon our ability to exercise our right to sovereignty and self-determination over our territory, without the imposition of colonial and alien powers designed to keep us in a position of servitude and dependency. As always, it is our duty, as the Tetuwan Oyate, to state clearly and bluntly that rights to development, rights to traditional education, rights to language, and rights to territory are founded upon our sovereignty and right to self-determination, as preserved in our treaties and in the articles of the Declaration on the Rights of the World's Indigenous peoples. Sovereignty is the cornerstone of our existence as PEOPLES under international law. This message is echoing around the world. Indigenous peoples of all continents and many nations are no longer content to stand outside international forums, placards in hand, waiting for attention. From the Working Group to the Permanent Forum to the World Conference Against Racism, we are taking our rightful place at the table, meeting eye to eye with colonial governments whose interests lie only in quieting our struggle.

No place is the power of this international movement of Indigenous peoples more evident than on the territory of our nation on the Pine Ridge reservation. As reported at last year's Working Group, our people are taking steps to exercise our rights as Peoples under international law to ensure that development on our territories is done according to our right to live as the Creator directed us to live. Our traditional people, elders, women and children, have continued for over a year and a half to occupy the previous chambers of the imposed government of the colonial power called the IRA Oglala Sioux Tribal Offices.

Our people, in declaring their independence have stated in an official proclamation that *"when a system doesn't work, such as the Indian Reorganization Act political system, the*

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Attachment 10

rights under treaties, reaffirm the illegality of the IRA government system, reaffirm the exhaustion of remedies within the domestic system of the colonial power, and "establish the *Tetuwan Lakota Oyate International Headquarters*" formally adopting "the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*." (The full text of the Proclamation is attached and respectfully submitted to the Working Group.) We were not made to live separate from our natural law and development must follow this law. Otherwise, we will cease to exist as a people.

The actions at Pine Ridge are not simply symbolic. They are positive steps in the direction of implementing our own Natural Law, traditional government and right to develop along the lines of international human rights law as a distinct people, with a territory, language, culture, government and tradition independent of all others. Establishment of an international embassy for Indigenous peoples is also meant to provide a center, a safe haven, for Indigenous peoples seeking to exercise the same rights, whether they be from the Americas, Australia, Africa or Asia. The traditional Lakota nation, in taking these steps, is once again assuming the responsibility of leadership and offering our alliance with any peoples whose aspirations are the same. As we did at the Little Big Horn 125 years ago, our people are willing to assume the front lines in protecting our territory, our culture and our distinct rights as peoples. That battle has not ended, although today the weapons are different. We will fight with international law in international forums in alliance with other Indigenous peoples.

There is an unstoppable movement in the world today that began in this very forum less than 20 years ago. It is a movement of Indigenous peoples demanding the same rights as all other peoples under international law. The developments at Pine Ridge echo this movement and will not be stopped. Nothing less than the full and complete achievement of these rights will end our journey within international forums for we know that Natural Law which is reflected in the founding documents of the United Nations, justice, and the power of the Canunpa (the Pipe) are ultimately our most powerful weapons. This movement is dedicated to the honor of our ancestors who fought the same battles. It is dedicated to our generations to come, for whom we fight the battle. And, it is dedicated to those who will ally with us in assuring that Lakota people and all Indigenous peoples will, in the words of our leader Tony Black Feather, have justice in the eyes of the world.

Wopila. Mitaku Oyasin.