



**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
July 8 - 12, 2013**

**Joint Statement
Native Youth Sexual Health Network and
International Indian Treaty Council**

Item 4: Follow-up to thematic studies and advice

Thank you Mr. Chair,

My name is Erin Konsmo and I am presenting a joint statement from the Native Youth Sexual Health Network and the International Indian Treaty Council.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to agenda item 4 and expand the discussion regarding previous EMRIP thematic studies. For the purpose of this statement we are concentrating on the follow-up report on Indigenous Peoples and the right to participate in decision making with a focus on extractive industries and growing concerns expressed by Indigenous women regarding impacts to reproductive health and justice as well as issues of sexual violence impacting, in particular, Indigenous women, youth and children.

Our statement is also meant to inform the EMRIP study on the intersections of environmental and reproductive justice for this years theme. We specifically see our sexual and reproductive health impacted by direct environmental violence resulting from violations of free, prior and informed consent, and an overburden of its effects is carried by Indigenous women, youth and children. This results in a reflective need for reproductive and environmental justice.

To date, we recognize and appreciate the important work of the EMRIP on this topic, but also feel that there has not been sufficient focus from the reports of the EMRIP on the link between extractive industries and environmental violence, as well as sexual violence and exploitation. Environmental violence has particular effects on the health of Indigenous women, girls and our generations yet unborn.

We reaffirm paragraph 37 of the follow-up report regarding Indigenous women and girls right to participate in decision making in the context of extractive industries as well as Article 22 of the UN Declaration regarding violence against Indigenous women and girls.

We acknowledge the terminology of environmental violence that was first articulated at the UN Permanent Forum's International Expert Group Meeting on Combating Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls in January 2012. Environmental violence was raised by the International Indian Treaty Council as a specific manifestation of violence in this report addressing the devastating health and reproductive impacts to women, children and future generations due to environmental toxins such as pesticides, mercury, nuclear contamination, and mining runoffs that are released into the environment without regard for the severe and ongoing harm.

The particular effects of environmental violence relating to impacts of extractive industries that we feel EMRIP, Indigenous human rights mechanisms and Member States need to address include:

- high rates of sexual, domestic and family violence as well as sexual exploitation in Indigenous communities where extractive industries are taking place, usually accompanied by large numbers of miners or other workers from outside
- high rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- effects of contamination including mercury, uranium and other toxins that continue to affect Indigenous women's reproductive health, their children and generations unborn

Many of the women participating in the 1st and 2nd International Indigenous Women's Symposia on Environmental and Reproductive Health in 2010 and 2012 presented testimony about the relationship of extractive industries violence and sexual exploitation as well as environmental contamination impacting reproductive health. We recognize that more work needs to be done to document these connections and impacts and request guidance from the EMRIP as to how these critical issues can be addressed in the context of their Study which has been submitted to the Human Rights Council and look forward to reporting back from the next global symposium, which will be held in Nicaragua in 2014. If advice can be submitted to the Council regarding support and encouragement to the women and girls who are facing these issues and to the Indigenous Peoples organizations who are working to call attention to and address them.

We take note with appreciation of the presence of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and also recognize his study and ongoing work on extractive industries. Over the course of the work of the SR, we recommend that a focus of environmental violence and reproductive justice be included in any follow-up studies on the situation of extractive industries.

Thank you Mr. Chair.