

**United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
7<sup>th</sup> Session, July 7- 11, 2014**

**International Indian Treaty Council Intervention, *Item 5: Continuation of the study on access to justice in the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, presented by Sewa Carmen, Youth Representatives, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council Alaska and Nicole Maria Yanes, Youth Representative, Indigenous Food Sovereignty Network, Mexico***

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I am speaking on behalf of the Indigenous youth delegation for the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) which includes Indigenous youth representatives from Chickaloon Village in Alaska and the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Network in Mexico. We thank IITC for giving us the opportunity as Indigenous youth to raise our concerns regarding the current EMRIP study on access to justice for Indigenous Peoples with a focus on Indigenous children and youth.

We appreciate the inclusion in the EMRIP report of the important issue of criminal justice and Indigenous youth. However we would like to request that the EMRIP study also include the issue of Access to Environmental Justice and impacts of Environmental Violence on Indigenous youth as a very important area of focus per Article 22 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

For example, directly across the street from the Chickaloon Village Ya Ne Da AH Tribal school in Alaska we are facing the threat of a new coal strip mine. The students at the school have stated their opposition to coal mining that devastated our tribe in the past. We do not agree that we as Indigenous children and youth should have to face the impacts on our culture, land, subsistence and way of life the way that our grandparents did. The Traditional Council in our village has stood behind the children and youth and is also opposing the new coal mine. The children of Chickaloon Village have said that our culture is like a strong river that rises and falls but never stops flowing. Coal mining does not fit with the vision that we have for our future and our cultural survival as Indigenous children and youth.

Another example is in Mexico, where we are facing unsustainable practices such as fracking, incineration, toxic pesticides and the forcing of genetically modified seeds on our communities. Our food sovereignty, culture and health are being seriously undermined. We, as Indigenous children and youth, will be faced with a contaminated environment and degradation of our traditional seed knowledge. We are working to ensure that the youth of today and tomorrow have our traditional seeds, clean water, a

clean environment as well as the traditional knowledge passed down by our elders to maintain our food sovereignty for future generations.

Protecting our environment from harmful practices like the ones we have mentioned is essential for us to have a healthy and strong future. As Youth, we will experience the main impacts and so we need to have a say in what happens today and in the future.

We also need to have the knowledge passed on from our elders about how to protect our sacred lands and resources so we can pass this knowledge to our own future generations in keeping with Article 25 of the UN Declaration that talks about our collective responsibilities to our future generations.

Our message to this session of the EMRIP is to stress the importance of listening to the youth to ensure that we are part of the process of free prior and informed consent that is our collective right as Indigenous Peoples. Because we will live with the consequences of the decisions made today, we believe that the youth need to part of shaping that future.. We can on EMRIP to stand with us in opposition to unsustainable extractive practices such as mining and drilling which lead to exploitation of children and youth and especially girls and young women in many of our communities.

We call on the EMRIP study to include access to environment justice for Indigenous youth and highlight best practices where ancestral knowledge is being passed down to future generations to ensure our health, well-being and survival. We can do that by establishing places and positions where the youth work directly with current leaders within and outside the United Nations so that we can be mentored into the process of practicing our ways of life and defending our rights and be more effective leaders in the future.

We ask the EMRIP to continue to include Indigenous youth when making decisions and continue the intergenerational dialogue that is going on today in future meetings.

We thank Chief Willie Littlechild for being part of our youth panel today and working to support decision-making for youth to uplift our struggles and understand the impacts of past abuses like residential and boarding schools on the youth of today. We would also like to extend an invitation to everyone to attend the panel that the IITC will be holding on the topic of Access to Justice for Indigenous Children and Youth: Working for the Rights and Justice for our Past, Current and Future Generations, where youth speakers will be featured. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

