



# International Indian Treaty Council

2940 16th Street, Suite 305,  
San Francisco, CA 94103-3664  
Teléfono: (415) 641-4482  
Fax: (415) 641-1298  
www.iitc.org



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## **United Nations expert Grand Chief Edward John will visit Standing Rock to gather information on Human Rights Violations Resulting from Pipeline Construction**

*Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, North Dakota, United States:* On Saturday October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Grand Chief Edward John, member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) will arrive in North Dakota, USA at the invitation of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault. As a United Nations (UN) expert, he will be visiting in his official capacity to observe the continued impacts of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) construction such as threats to water, Treaty rights and sacred areas. He will also collect information and testimonies on the escalating levels of repression, violence and intimidation against Tribal members and their supporters by state law enforcement, private security and the National Guard which have been widely reported on social and other media. Roberto Borrero representing the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) will accompany him as a human rights observer. IITC Board member William Means of the Oglala Lakota Nation is already on site.

The pipeline would carry nearly half a billion barrels of crude oil a day, and would cross the Missouri River threatening the Tribe's main water source and sacred places along its path including burials sites. IITC and the SRST submitted two joint urgent actions to the UN Human Rights system, including four UN Special Rapporteurs, in August and September of this year. The submission highlighted a number of human rights violations and requested that these UN human rights mandate holders call upon the United States to uphold its commitments under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty.

Grand Chief Edward John has been an Indigenous expert member of the UNPFII from North America for the past 6 years. He is a hereditary Chief of the Tl'azt'en Nation from British Columbia Canada. Roberto Mukaro Borrero is a member of the IITC Board of Directors representing the United Confederation of Taino People, based in the Caribbean and serves as IITC's UN Programs and Communications Coordinator.

Grand Chief John expressed his reasons for carrying out this visit as a UN expert focusing on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: *"The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has been following this situation and issued a statement of concern on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Indigenous Peoples human and Treaty right to water, protection of sacred sites, and right to free prior and informed consent before development is carried out affecting their territories, and the protection of Indigenous human and environmental rights defenders are all areas that the Permanent Forum has prioritized. These are all matters of concern in the current developments occurring in North Dakota United States as a result of the ongoing Dakota Access Pipeline. As a member of the Permanent Forum, I will be traveling to North Dakota tomorrow at the invitation of the Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Dave Archambault to further observe and investigate the situation there, including the increase in law enforcement and military in the areas along with over a hundred arrests and other forms of violence that have been reported. I will report my findings back to the Permanent Forum and I hope to be able play a role in making recommendations to all parties that respect the rights affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which the United States now supports."*

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (SRST) has also extended an invitation to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of indigenous Peoples, which is currently in process.

A primary concern expressed by the SRST is the potential devastating effects on the Missouri River, its primary water source. In his letter inviting Grand Chief Edward John dated today, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Chairman Archambault expressed the urgency of the situation facing the Tribe: *“Currently, we are experiencing violence and intimidation from state law enforcement, private security as well as the North Dakota National Guard which are moving to forcibly remove us from our encampment located on unceded Treaty lands. Over 120 arrests have been made in the last two days, and tear gas, mace, compression grenades and other forms of violence have been used against tribal members and our supporters representing over 300 US Native Nations who are peacefully protecting our human, environmental, and cultural and Treaty rights. Our Tribe can no longer sacrifice our sacred water, our graves and our Mother Earth, and our future generations for the financial gain of private industry which has shown no regard for our rights or concerns.”*

*For more information contact:*

Andrea Carmen  
tel: +(520)273-6003  
andrea@treatycouncil.com

Roberto Borrero, IITC Communications Coordinator  
email: [communications@treatycouncil.org](mailto:communications@treatycouncil.org)  
tel: +(917) 334-5658

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*The International Indian Treaty Council is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Arctic, Pacific and Caribbean in General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). IITC was founded in 1974 on the Standing Reservation. For additional information log on to [www.iitc.org](http://www.iitc.org).*