

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

The Chiefs-in-Assembly have directed AFN engagement in international activities and mechanisms to advance First Nations rights. Therefore, the AFN is mandated to pursue an international dimension to its advocacy and activities.

The AFN advances the rights and interests of First Nations internationally by: strategically participating in key international fora and events; forging relationships and partnerships with other Indigenous peoples and their organizations and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs); facilitating international political, economic, cultural, and social relationships between First Nations and foreign States; and, seeking to establish working relationships with Canada towards informing their foreign and international policy approaches and objectives on matters of shared interest.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Summit of the Americas

The Summit of the Americas are gatherings of the heads of state and government of the Western Hemisphere where leaders discuss common policy issues, affirm shared values and commit to national and regional level actions to address continuing and new challenges faced in the Americas.

At the Summit of Americas gathering on April 11-12, 2018 in Lima, Peru during which time the Heads of State of participating nations affirmed their commitment to the full and equal protection of Indigenous peoples in the hemisphere. The Government of Canada was included in this affirmation of support.

At the same time as the summit was convening in Lima, Indigenous leaders from the Americas were holding a parallel American Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) session to ensure their unique interests were represented. The Métis National Council and the AFN were instrumental in organizing and providing support for the Indigenous Summit.

Regional Chief Marlene Poitras represented the AFN at these events.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council with the mandate to deal with Indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. The 17th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues occurred on April 16-27, 2018 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild represented the AFN at the event. By virtue of a statement, he recommended that States work in partnership with Indigenous peoples to develop legislative and decision-making processes to ensure respect for their lands, territories and resources, with free, prior and informed consent. He urged States to dismantle colonial laws and end litigation based on denial of Indigenous peoples' rights.

Regional Chief Marlene Poitras delivered closing remarks for the 17th Session of the UNPFII. In her closing remarks she stated that “[o]ur dialogue this year should motivate us in the work that lies ahead in each region to realize human rights and development for all.”

Universal Periodic Review

Canada's third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) occurred on May 11, 2018, in Geneva, Switzerland. The Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, Jody Wilson-Raybould led Canada's delegation as the first Minister to head Canada's UPR team. During Canada's review, 112 states made interventions recommending Canada address a number of human rights issues. Over 70% of interventions referenced Canada's obligation to address inequality facing Indigenous peoples, with most comments referring to the protection of Indigenous women and girls. This is in line with previous state interventions through Canada's first and second UPR.

Minister Wilson-Raybould committed Canada to strengthening intergovernmental collaboration and public dialogue on human rights through development of protocol on recommendations Canada receives on international human rights bodies. Canada also committed to enhanced federal/provincial/territorial human rights implementation through the creation of a senior intergovernmental mechanism.

The Assembly of First Nations provided feedback on Canada's report and will continue to monitor. Canada released its response to the recommendations from the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review on September 18, 2018.

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by its State parties.

The 93rd meeting of United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination took place in Geneva, Switzerland from July 31 – August 25. Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild delivered a statement on behalf of the National Chief on August 14, 2017 where he highlighted the link between the denial of First Nations rights to self-

determination (and to benefit from the rich resources of our lands) to the vast socio-economic gap between First Nations and Canadians. Grand Chief Littlechild also highlighted Canada's commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation based on recognition of rights and the Assembly of First Nations' effort to co-develop an Indigenous Languages Act. He concluded his remarks with a call upon the Government of Canada to honour its human rights obligations.

In addition, the AFN wrote and submitted a report to CERD. In response to AFN's statement and report, CERD recommended that Canada adopt a legislative framework, a national action plan and also reform national laws, policies and regulations to bring them into compliance with the UN Declaration.

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) provides the Human Rights Council with expertise and advice on the rights of Indigenous peoples as set out in the UN Declaration.

The 11th session of EMRIP occurred in Geneva, Switzerland from July 9-13, 2018 and focused on the theme of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). The Assembly of First Nations was represented by Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild during the event. The AFN contributed a technical paper on FPIC to support the EMRIP study on the subject. The EMRIP study on FPIC will be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-ninth session in September 2018.

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, at the global level. The HLPF occurred in New York from July 9-18, 2018. Canada gave its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the afternoon of July 17, 2018. Canada's VNR lacked substance and was forward looking.

Grand Chief Littlechild represented the Assembly of First Nations at the event and urged for an Indigenous perspective in the implementation of the sustainable development goals such as Indigenous peoples' rights to development, self-determination, Free, Prior and Informed Consent and Indigenous traditional knowledge. The AFN also called on Canada to create a more robust and meaningful engagement with First Nations in the implementation of Agenda 2030 to ensure that the process will use, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, a means to measure the gap in the quality of life between First Nations people and Canada.

NEXT STEPS – MOVING FORWARD

- The AFN will participate in the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity taking place from November 17 – 29 of November, 2018 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt; and
- The AFN will continue to monitor and hold and the Government of Canada accountable to honour its human rights obligations and the rights and interests of First Nations, internationally.