



NOTE: UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES-SEVENTEENTH SESSION
Date: April 18th 2018.

Process: ***RECOGNITION FROM THE CHAIR***

- Representative of Metis Settlements General Council – President Gerald Cunningham
- #23 on the Speakers List

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Thank you Madame Chair,

The Metis Settlements General Council, of which I am democratically elected to represent, is the central Indigenous government of the only recognized Metis-land base in the world – holding 1.25 million acres of Metis land in North-Western Canada. We hold our lands collectively among Eight land-bases with Constitutional protection of our lands; this prohibits the expropriation of our Metis lands from the Crown.

We are the true Stewards of our traditional lands and the proper children of our sacred lands – we call on Canada to fully recognize and respect the Metis Settlements General Council as the Representative government of our Metis Settlements and our traditional lands.

In Canada, us land-based Metis, are exercising our collective rights to self-determination and autonomy, – key principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people, of which our Metis Settlements General Council Assembly unanimously adopted in November 2016.

All though I do appreciate Canada’s attempt to recognize Indigenous rights, I am concerned. I must call on Canada to immediately recognize our inherent jurisdiction and rights by way of direct bi-lateral meetings with the Metis Settlements General Council Leadership.

Additionally, our greatest concerns are of state discrimination – Canada, like many states, have chosen to establish relationships with select groups. In Canada they have restricted their permanent bi-lateral meetings with Indigenous people to merely three organizations in a country that is home to a vast array of nations, Indigenous governments, and land-protectors – this is in conflict with the UN-Declaration.

Canada’s Prime Minster has declared that his most important relationship is with Indigenous people in Canada – the Metis Settlements call on Canada & Prime Minster Justin Trudeau to

honour his words and meet with the Nations on the lands not just outside his front door steps in Ottawa. Further to that point, Canada's relationship with indigenous people ignores the land-based people on the ground, especially the Metis Settlements – whom have been ignored for 150 years. Our peoples concerns are that Canada will simply choose whom they want to negotiate with rather than truly taking the effort to understanding the conditions on our Metis Settlements, its people, and our traditional territories.

We do not simply want to administer Canada's programs and services - we want the full recognition and implementation of our rights to self-governance, autonomy, and land so that we may protect, utilize, and cherish our children's inheritance.

As leaders of today, we owe it to our future generations to get it right, but it starts by having the opportunity to be heard and to tell our own story in our own words.

Lastly, I want to call on member states and the United Nations to include Indigenous governments, such as the Metis Settlements General Council, as full participating members at all levels of the UN in order to report on the progress of our government and to bring our gifts, concerns, and knowledge to the international level.

We also support the recommendations made by Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild.

Thank you Madame Chair.

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