**The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 79th Session**

**June 21st-July 1st, 2021**

**General discussion on “the rights of indigenous women and girls”**

**Statement of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs**

**Speaker: Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and Chief of the Neskonlith Indian Band**

My name is Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, and I am Secretary-Treasurer for the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and Chief of the Neskonlith Indian Band, Skat'sin te Secwépemc. It is my honour to present the following statement on behalf of the UBCIC which represents over a hundred and ten First Nations in British Columbia, Canada and has been mandated by its Chiefs Council to protect Indigenous women and girls from the colonial forces in Canada that continue to threaten their safety, wellbeing, and rights.

This statement addresses the impacts of systemic violence and discrimination upon the rights of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. I would like to bring to the Committee’s attention the following key challenges to the rights of Indigenous women and girls in Canada:

**Challenges:**

1. Sex Discrimination
   1. Discrimination against Indigenous women and girls is as old as Canada itself and was born from it its laws and policies and rooted in the Doctrine of Discovery, the fictitious and racist legal concept that European countries acquired the claim and Title to Indigenous Peoples’ lands upon ‘discovering’ them.
   2. The 1876 Indian Act imposed a patriarchal system under which First Nations women were robbed of their Indian status upon marriage to a non-Indian man and prevented from transmitting status to their children.
   3. First Nations women were not only denied their status, but their treaty, land, and property rights, their families, cultures, and identities. This practice of forced assimilation continues to reverberate through First Nations communities in the form of gender-based violence, intergenerational trauma, poverty, and experiences of racism and has intensified barriers to employment, education, health, and safety.
2. MMIWG Crisis
   1. The brutal colonization of Turtle Island and the racist and sexist policies enforced by Canada paved the way for the violence, murders, and disappearances of the MMIWG crisis
   2. Canada has failed to respond to the crisis of MMIWG as genocide and Indigenous communities continue to face apathy, biased policing, and government inaction in the face of their stolen relatives.
   3. Families of MMIWG and survivors bear the undue burden of advocacy and the fight for justice and full recognition of First Nations women’s rights, and insufficient action to date has been taken to support them
3. Health care:
   1. the health care system has been used for hundreds of years as a colonial tool to police and control the bodies of Indigenous women; hospitals were the site of Canada’s forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women and Indian Hospitals and Residential Schools were sites of abuse and medical experimentation
   2. In 2020, an independent investigation into anti-Indigenous racism in British Columbia’s health care system entitled “In Plain Sight” affirmed the existence and impacts of anti-Indigenous racism, which includes major gaps in services and supports for Indigenous women and girls recovering from violence and trauma
4. Far too many Indigenous communities, particularly rural and remote ones, do not have the resources or the capacity to respond to sexual violence, and there is a critical lack of accessible, culturally appropriate health and wellness programs and supports.
5. Land Rights and Environmental Stewardship:
   1. Policing and the criminalization of Indigenous women and girls is used to further the State’s two-fold project of controlling land and resources, and undermining Indigenous Title and Rights, jurisdiction, and sovereignty
   2. Indigenous women and girls are on the frontlines protecting environment within their territories from climate change impacts and destructive resource extraction projects, but face excessive use of force by policing authorities at Indigenous-led land protests, state surveillance, hate speech, blackmail, harassment and racist attacks
   3. Man camps are temporary housing facilities made for predominantly male workers on natural resource development projects. Research has proven that there is a direct correlation between these encampments and violence against women
   4. Man camps illustrate how Canada has long created and supported structures that operate through coercion and violence against Indigenous women and communities.