



UN Expert Seminar on Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Health

*McGill University
Montreal, Canada
21-22 February 2016*

Concept Note

Background

Established by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2007, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides the Council with thematic advice on the rights of indigenous peoples in the form of studies and research. The studies and advice of the Expert Mechanism are meant to provide a better understanding of the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to propose concrete actions that States, indigenous peoples, civil society, international organizations, national human rights institutions and others can take in order to further its implementation.

The Expert Mechanism's studies place special emphasis on the participation of indigenous peoples themselves in decisions that affect them. To date, the Expert Mechanism has carried out studies on themes including indigenous peoples' rights with respect to their cultural heritage, access to justice for indigenous peoples, the right to participate in decision-making, and the right of indigenous peoples to education. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides secretariat support to the Expert Mechanism.

In September 2015, the Human Rights Council requested the Expert Mechanism to undertake a study on indigenous peoples and the right to health, with a focus on children and youth, to be presented to the Council at its 33rd session in September 2016. A draft of the study will be discussed and finalized for presentation to the Council during the 9th session of the Expert Mechanism (11-15 July 2016).

The Expert Mechanism has traditionally partnered with academic institutions in order to organize a seminar on the theme of its annual study. The Institute for the Study of International Development at McGill University will host the 2016 seminar on Indigenous peoples and the right to health.

The Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID) is a globally recognized teaching and research institute located at McGill University. The Institute works to improve people's lives through cutting edge research, training and communication intended to accelerate global sustainable development. It does this by educating successive generations of socially responsible and politically engaged students, developing intellectual capacity, and conducting leading edge research that is relevant for policymaking. Equally important, ISID is committed to connecting our teaching and research with the decision makers and principal actors tackling today's most pressing issues by

supporting and engaging with NGOs, governments, community organizations, private sector actors, and civil society more broadly, working to increase our collective capacity for achieving sustainable development that will lead to economic and social improvements across the globe.

The Institute has made significant contributions to the analysis and research of international indigenous issues. These efforts include research on the rights of indigenous peoples, a conference on Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and an executive program in the area of reconciliation, conflict prevention and the promotion of more inclusive societies.

The Institute is part of McGill University, one of Canada's best-known institutions of higher learning and one of the leading universities in the world. With students coming to McGill from some 150 countries, our student body is the most internationally diverse of any research-intensive university in the country. McGill was founded in 1821 thanks to a generous bequest by James McGill, and since then, has grown from a small college to a bustling university with two campuses, 11 faculties, some 300 programs of study, and 40,000 students. The University also partners with four affiliated teaching hospitals to graduate over 1,000 health care professionals each year.

Objectives

The objective of the Expert Seminar is to inform the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on its 2016 study on Indigenous peoples and the right to health. The Seminar will also provide an opportunity for exchange among academics, practitioners and other experts on this issue.

Participants

The Seminar will bring together approximately 30 participants, including:

- Members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Experts on indigenous peoples and the right to health from different regions
- Staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Academics from McGill University
- Staff from relevant UN agencies
- Academic friends of the Expert Mechanism working on the right to health

In addition, students will be welcome to observe the proceedings of the Seminar.

Structure of the seminar

The seminar will be structured along the central themes to be addressed in the Expert Mechanism's study. The seminar's structure will be designed to best enable contributions by participants to the topics addressed in the draft Study, which will be disseminated to participants before the seminar begins. It is hoped that the focus of each session will be on suggestions for language, examples/cases and ideas for inclusion in the Study.

A preliminary list of topics to be addressed in the Study is as follows:

- The international legal framework regarding indigenous peoples and the right to health
- Traditional medicine
- Culturally relevant approaches to healthcare
- Discrimination in access to healthcare

- Indigenous children and youth: Addictions; Suicide; Specific Health Concerns
- Sexual and Reproductive health and rights
- Environmental health
- Treaty rights to health
- Mental health
- Indigenous persons with disabilities and the right to health
- Non-communicable diseases
- Violence against indigenous women