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Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Seventeenth session  
Intervention

*Item 7: International Decade of Indigenous Languages*

dai chil s'la. Jen Procter Andrews sinsanuu. kokwel k'a'uu, halqáimał mecum ildə san, heniye tlə'nə halqáima duu dluugwa də kamasdan tl'dayasich. Hello, friends and cousins, I'm Jen Procter Andrews, Vice-Chair of the Coquille Indian Tribe.

Through the atrocities that were implemented in what we call the Indian Boarding Schools, the U.S. government alone spent billions of dollars over more than 100 years in an effort to wipe out Indigenous languages. Children were kidnapped and taken to institutions far from their families, beaten and abused in horrible ways when they spoke their Native languages.

Language embodies our thoughts; thoughts become actions, and actions have impact.

Language is foundational to Indigenous identity and a cornerstone of the Indigenous Determinants of Health. Language expresses how we live, create, sing and dream our Indigenaety, in relief from the restrictions of colonial influence.

In the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the term “stakeholder”, is used in reference to Indigenous participation, which is harmful to Indigenous Peoples, as it historically refers to colonizers claiming their stakes on Indigenous land. The children at the boarding schools are not stakeholders, they are rights holders and we are rights holders. Indigenous Peoples are not stakeholders in our lives or cultures.

Therefore, I ask the Expert Mechanism of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to:

- Discontinue the use of derogatory language when referring to Indigenous Peoples, to create safe space for Indigenous participation in work that includes or refers to us, our culture, or lands by using terms such as “rights holders”.

- Ensure languages come back to life through the voices of rights holders, the Indigenous mothers and children, family learners, speakers, and teachers.
- Develop consistent and enforceable modes of protection from exploitation or monetization of Indigenous languages and data, ensuring Indigenous Peoples who learn, teach, or speak vulnerable languages are at the forefront of policy development throughout the process.
- Address and support the Indigenous Determinants of Health by recommending that Member States make significant and ongoing investments in supporting Indigenous language learners and teachers at the community level.

I thank you for your time and attention today.