**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**17th Session, 8 – 12, July 2024**

**Item 7:** International Decade of Indigenous Languages

**Indigenous Peoples Organization**: Ontario Native Women’s Association | [www.onwa.ca](http://www.onwa.ca)

* Thank you, Chair
* *Traditional opening*
* My name is Shanayah Echum. I am a Youth Board Director at the Ontario Native Women’s Association—the oldest and largest Indigenous women’s organization in Canada.
* I am here amplifying the collective voices of over 30 Indigenous women’s organizations and groups.
* As an Indigenous youth, I know that our languages are fundamental to our identities, cultures, spirituality, and self-determination as well as relationships with the land and to the world.
* Our languages are used to pass down Indigenous histories and knowledge systems from one generation to the next, to youth, to our family, our community, amongst a nation.
* Our languages teach us to recognize all relations, what their roles are and what our responsibility is to them.
* Our languages interpret our experiences on the land, help us to know who we are within our world, our social structure, and who we are as a people in relation to all other worldly beings.
* Yet, through the process of colonization and its’ lasting intergenerational trauma, Indigenous languages were put under attack - Indigenous languages in Canada are in a state of endangerment.
* Last year, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples visited Canada and noted in his end of mission statement that 75% of Indigenous languages in Canada are in danger of disappearing.
* We call for support to restore, reclaim, and revitalize our languages, cultures, and identities for Indigenous women and youth today and for our future generations.
* **We recommend EMRIP:**

1. **Urge the Human Rights Council to implement Proposal 7 of the 2023 Expert Mechanism’s Annual Report to the Council**

* We further recommend that any future work related to Indigenous languages include an Indigenous gender-based lens and consider Indigenous women and youth’s inherent rights in the promotion and fulfilment of Indigenous language rights.

1. **Urge States to allocate appropriate funding to Indigenous women’s organizations**

* Our organizations must be funded to maintain and provide access to traditional languages, cultures, Indigenous knowledge, land-based knowledge and healing, histories of colonialization and its ongoing manifestations, and stories of the impact of Indigenous women and youth’s leadership.
* Indigenous youth, like me, know that language and culturally grounded programs and services are vitally important. These are critical to our futures as young Indigenous leaders in community.

1. **Ensure Indigenous women’s and youth full, effective, meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of decision making.**

* We have the right to be empowered in our roles as leaders and knowledge-bearers and must be at decision-making tables—including those related to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Miigwetch. Matna. Mersee. Nia:Wen.