



INDIGENOUS SACRED STAFFS RECEIVED BY PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES AT UN HEADQUARTERS

New York, 16 May 2003 —Two bundles of Sacred Staffs of the Confederacy of the Eagle and the Condor carried on a 500-mile Spiritual Run through the territories of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy were received at United Nations Headquarters on Wednesday, 14 May morning by delegations of Indigenous Peoples from around the world attending the second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Mr. Wilton Littlechild of the Cree Nation, and a member of the Permanent Forum, took the Staffs into the conference room where the Forum is meeting, where they were received ceremonially and placed on the podium. They remained there throughout the day, guarded by the Peace and Dignity runners.

The Spiritual Runners of the Peace and Dignity Journeys, carrying the Staffs, have traversed the continents of North, Central and South America three times since 1992, in fulfilment of a traditional mandate of the indigenous nations, known as the Confederation of the Eagle and the Condor.

The runners – seven youths and elders, male and female, ranging in age from 14 to 73, began their run at the western door of the Six Nations Confederacy in Towanda, New York. Following the traditional protocol of the Six Nations, they ran to Onondaga over three days, were hosted there, and then ran to the United Nations, where they were received at the gate to the public plaza on 14 May by representatives of indigenous nations confederations from around the world.

"We have made this journey to the door of the United Nations Headquarters as an assertion of our self-determination, our right to self-definition and spiritual fulfillment as indigenous nations of the Earth," Gustavo Gutierrez, coordinator of the Peace and Dignity Journeys for North America, told the Permanent Forum. "The government states of the United Nations system may have status as internationally recognized governments, states, or government states, but we are the Nations."

The Spiritual Runners of the Peace and Dignity Journeys have travelled the entire length of North, Central, and South America three times since 1992 carrying the Staffs, in fulfilment of a traditional mandate of the indigenous nations, known as the Confederation of the Eagle and the Condor.

In 2004, they will travel from Alaska to Kuna Yala, Panama, to bring the Staffs to a ceremony of peace and unification for the peoples of the world. The Staffs are currently in the care of the Okanagan Nation of British Columbia, Canada.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, established as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), is meeting at United Nations Headquarters from 12 to 23 May.

For information on the Permanent Forum, please visit its web site at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/index.html> or contact Ellen McGuffie at (212) 963-0499, e-mail: mcguffie@un.org.

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