Questionnaire to Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations

The secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues invites Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations to complete the attached questionnaire on any action taken or planned related to indigenous peoples’ rights, policies and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Questionnaire responses will be placed on the Permanent Forum’s website and also compiled into one report for the Forum’s fifteenth session.

Please submit your completed questionnaire by 1 January 2016 to:

Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Division for Social Policy and Development
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Room: S-2958
United Nations Headquarters
New York. USA 10017
Telephone: 917-367-5100; fax: 917-367-5102
Email: smallacombe@un.org
The fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues shall be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 9 to 20 May 2016.

The provisional agenda for the Permanent Forum’s fifteenth session includes:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum.
5. Discussion on the theme “Indigenous peoples: conflict, peace and resolution”.
7. Dialogue with Member States.
9. Coordination among the three United Nations mechanisms pertaining to indigenous peoples:
   (a) Coordination among the three United Nations mechanisms pertaining to indigenous peoples;
   (b) Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

10. Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and Social Council and emerging issues.
11. Provisional agenda for the sixteenth session.
12. Adoption of the report of the Permanent Forum on its fifteenth session.

1. Please provide the name of your organization and the country where it is based.

   Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) – based in Canada

2. What are the main objectives and goals of your organization?

   - to act as a regional council, group or association to solve and assist in solving the problems of the Cree people of Quebec;
   - to assist the Cree people of Quebec through all means permitted by law to affirm, exercise, protect, enlarge and have recognized and accepted the rights, claims and interests of the Cree people of Quebec;
   - to foster, promote, protect and assist in preserving the way of life, values and traditions of the Cree people of Quebec;
   - to improve and assist in improving the conditions in Cree communities and lands of northern Quebec and to foster and promote the development of the Cree communities, lands and people of Quebec;
   - to act as a regional or local government, authority, administrative or managerial body, institution or group in respect to such subject matters as may be given, delegated or confided to it by the Cree people;
   - to provide regional services in regard to programs, communications and activities which may affect or benefit the Cree people of Quebec.

3. Which indigenous groups does your organization represent and what is the total number of indigenous peoples within these groups?

   The GCC(EI) represents approximately 18,000 Crees residing in nine Cree communities in James Bay, Québec.

4. Has your Organization participated in any sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues? If yes, please indicate the year(s).

   The GCC(EI) has participated in all 14 sessions from 2002-2015.

5. In what ways does the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues support indigenous peoples in your organization?

   The Special Themes and PF Studies are especially helpful in providing much-needed focus and analysis on specific issues of concern. In addition, the annual reports include a wealth of information on a wide range of human rights issues relating to Indigenous peoples – and these reports effectively highlight existing concerns.

   Some Forum Members are very helpful in taking into account recommendations raised by our organization.
6. At its fifteenth session in 2016, the Permanent Forum’s theme will be Indigenous Peoples: conflict, peace and resolution. Please provide information as to whether your organization is working on issues related to conflict, peace and resolution for indigenous peoples. Where possible, please include information on the situation of indigenous women in your responses.

Conflicts often arise in the context of: i) lands, territories and resources; ii) implementation of the 1975 James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (which constitutes a treaty under Canada’s Constitution); and iii) violence against Indigenous women and girls.

In regard to issues i) and ii), the GCC(EI) has engaged actively in both litigation and entering into numerous agreements with the federal and Québec governments since the early 1970s. In order to achieve cooperative and harmonious relations with the Québec government, a long-term agreement was entered into in 2002. This Agreement is often referred to as “La Paix des Braves” (The Peace of the Braves).

In regard to issue iii), the GCC(EI) has strongly supported the call for a national inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. Such an inquiry was rejected for years by the former Conservative government of Canada. However, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s newly-elected federal government has formally announced that such an inquiry will take place in 2016.

In October 2015, there were a series of shocking revelations by three Indigenous women of sexual and physical abuses suffered at the hands of police officers in Val d’Or, Québec. Since then, more than a dozen women have come forward. Reports of abuse continue to come in from other regions, including Cree territory. The Grand Chief of the GCC(EI) and other Indigenous leaders have met with the Premier of Québec to underline the gravity of such ongoing abuses and the need for fundamental reforms. The Québec government has initiated an investigation into this whole matter. However, the magnitude of the problem must not be underestimated. Racism and other discrimination in the public security forces and administration of justice in Québec must be eliminated.

Further, Indigenous peoples and civil society are investigating in an informal working group, including GCC(EI) representatives. The GCC(EI) and Cree Nation Government are also engaging in a new alliance with Val d’Or to address the ongoing racism and discrimination and ensure much-needed change.

7. In the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/69/2), member States committed themselves to “taking, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, appropriate measures at the national level, including legislative, policy and administrative measures, to achieve the ends of the Declaration…” (paragraph 7) on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and that the action plan be developed in consultation with Member States, Indigenous Peoples and the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues.

In relation to the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, please outline the following:
Has your organization been involved in any state-led measures to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? Please provide details on the level of your participation.

A “top priority” of the newly-elected federal government is to implement recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), starting with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In particular, the TRC has called upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments in Canada to fully adopt and implement the UN Declaration as “the framework for reconciliation”. The GCC(EI) is a member of a broad Coalition of Indigenous and human rights organizations, which has already met with the new Minister of Indigenous Affairs. Our main purpose is to collaborate with the government of Canada in implementing this and other commitments. We are providing written materials on the UN Declaration to the new government. This year we will focus on a national action plan for implementation.

What are the major successes as well as the remaining obstacles for the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the people that organization represents?

A major success is to have the federal government commit to fully implement the UN Declaration. A remaining challenge is to ensure that the government interprets the Declaration in a manner that is consistent with Indigenous peoples’ rights and related State obligations under international human rights law.

Is your organization involved in the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data or culturally relevant data on indigenous peoples?

Some work has been done in relation to the James Bay Cree people.

How does your organization implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the community level?

In 2010, a workshop on the UN Declaration was organized to inform Cree Community Justice Officers and Community Reintegration Officers. Webinars on the Declaration have also been held nationwide that are accessible to Cree communities. However, communities would benefit from additional workshops and webinars on the Declaration.

Does your organization provide regular or ad hoc capacity-building programmes on indigenous peoples’ rights for staff and members of the community, or planned capacity-building activities in this area?

Not beyond what has been described under question 8 above.

Does the United Nations support your organization’s work on indigenous peoples’ issues?
Yes. In addition to the UN Permanent Forum, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and various UN special rapporteurs and independent experts contribute to the jurisprudence relating to Indigenous peoples or otherwise address Indigenous concerns. UN treaty bodies are also helpful in this context. The GCC(EI) engages with these diverse bodies and mechanisms.

11. Please provide information of conferences and other meetings organized or supported by your Organization for 2016 and 2017.

As in past years, the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples – which includes the GCC(EI) – will continue to hold meetings in 2016 and 2017 on Indigenous rights and concerns. Such meetings include both international and domestic human rights strategies.