Amy Thomson- Maple Leaf International School, Trinidad

New Zealand

United Nations Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

*Position Paper for the Special Session on Indigenous Affairs*

1. Indigenous Peoples, Healthcare, Mental Health, and Wellness

The rights and affairs of indigenous peoples is a widespread issues which affects many different groups of people in many countries around the world. A similarity between countries facing issues regarding the healthcare of indigenous people could be countries the were colonised in history. Countries such as the The United States of America, South Africa, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were all colonised by European countries who forced the movement of the land’s indigenous people ("Western European Colonialism and Colonization - Wikipedia"). Due to this past unfair treatment countries have in recent years been working to right these wrongs and create better treatment in the future. The healthcare, mental health, and wellness of the indigenous people is of great importance as they deserve to be treated and be given the same assets as any other citizen of a country, and not treated as less due to their ethnicity.("WHO | Health of Indigenous Peoples"). There have been many attempts at total equality and equal treatment of indigenous people and non-indigenous people made by the UN. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, World Health Organization (WHO), and System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) are all working towards establishing equal rights of indigenous people, and their freedom from discrimination due to different ethnic background("United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People"). The declaration was successfully ratified in 144 countries and is now adopted in 148, and is applying its condition in multiple countries, while WHO is enforcing the importance of universal health coverage and information about disease danger and prevention around the world("United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People"). The main ideals of these action plans can be adapted as they include the basic health rights that should be accessible and/or provided for indigenous personnel of a country. New Zealand’s Ministry of Health has enacted multiple incentives to make healthcare more accessible and culturally acceptable to the indigenous people. Primary Health Care in New Zealand is working to right past inequalities in access to health care services that indigenous people have faced, and are offering more culturally sensitive alternative care options for the indigenous peoples (*Ministry of Health NZ*). New Zealand’s goals are to improve the health care system to provide equally services for the indigenous and non-indigenous people, and make healthcare more specialized for the indigenous people (*Ministry of Health NZ*).

1. Indigenous Land Rights, Climate Change impacts and Environmental Protection of Resources

The current exploitation or resources, dispute of land, and change of climate are negatively affecting indigenous world round, especially in countries such as Uganda, Peru, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia ("Indigenous Peoples Hardest Hit by Climate Change Describe Impacts Science News"). Plantations within these countries tend to be the root cause of the indigenous land disputes as people are displaced from their lands so it could be used for the plantations. In some cases the colonization of countries had major effects on the situation of land disputes today as treaties were signed, often unfair towards the indigenous personnel as they were pushed off of their land, and not permitted access to their resources ("The Devastating Effects of Extractive Activities on Peru’s Indigenous Peoples"). The changing of climate also requires adaption of the indigenous people, who have emitted the least amount of greenhouse gas emission, yet will face the consequence most severely as it will change their environment. The United Nations has discussed the issue of climate change in great detail, and have recognised the issues of land rights and the protection of natural resources. The United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous People states that indigenous people should have the rights to their land and resources, with the goal of equal rights of both indigenous and non-indigenous people ("United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People"). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also discussed many possible solutions, most of which focus on countries making efforts to lessen their greenhouse gas emissions which would result in the prevention of climate change in which case the indigenous people won’t feel the negative effects("United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change"). In an effort to lessen their contribution to climate change New Zealand ratified the UNFCCC and has their own national efforts to address the problems. New Zealand has its own internal policies attempting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10-20% by 2020 ("United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change"). There is also the Resource Management Act which calls for more sustainable management of resource such as land, air, and water("Resource Management Act"). The Conservation Act, the idea of which is to conserve indigenous biodiversity within New Zealand ("Conservation Act 1987 – New Zealand Legislation"). Regarding land disputes New Zealand has the Treaty of Waitangi settling illegal land or resource claims in the past by designating land back to the people, or offering cash supplements. The goals of the nation being to establish equality in land law between all New Zealanders(“Policies and Measures")

1. Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development

The poverty rate of indigenous people is an immense issue in many countries, especially those regions in Latin America, which face the brunt of the issue. Throughout history indigenous people have been more impoverished than any other people in a country because they tend to have lower class jobs and drastically lower incomes ("Underdevelopment, Poverty of Latin America’s Indigenous Peoples"). Colonization plays a role in this separation historically speaking as when foreigners would come to a land the indigenous people would be moved, and then not integrated into the new society but sometime, be left to their own devices, yet expected to both pay and act like the other portion of society ("Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Human Development in Latin America"). Lack of education is also a major contribution to the poverty rates of worldwide indigenous people. With less education, people have less skills, resulting in less specialized jobs, equalling lower pay, causing indigenous people to have a lower salary than most others ("Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development - Cambridge University Press"). Action the United Nations has made to correct this issue is again, the Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous People which addresses the problem of the poverty of indigenous people. The declaration focuses on everyone having the right to food, water, housing, sanitation, and dignity ("United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People"). New Zealand makes an active effort to work to a more balanced population and less impoverished indigenous personnel. New Zealand has ratified the Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous People stating that they agree with its terms, and in addition to that, they have their own initiatives. There is the Expert Advisory Group which works nationally to make it realistic for every family to have enough basic income to support their family and to ensure that children grow up in safe healthy households ("Poverty and Human Rights"). To solve the overall issue of the rights of indigenous people there are a number of options. In an environmental standpoint there needs to be more movement towards both nuclear and renewable energy sources which will lessen the gas emissions and slow climate change. For indigenous people the environment can be more habitable despite the damages by ensuring reserves have sufficient reserves food and cleaner water by using filtration, UV, or reverse osmosis. Healthwise, health care should be equally accessible for all citizens in countries, and health care programs should be put in place to help indigenous people with culturally appropriate and more affordable options. Also, specific cultural groups that are genetically predisposed to specific diseases and disorders should have more specialized healthcare that is free and easily accessible. In a poverty and development viewpoint there should be more control over money distribution within reserves ensuring that all people receive adequate amount of money, and some are not left with nothing. There should also be widely spread, specialized welfare systems put in place for indigenous people to improve their living standards, and change the poverty rate. When deciding upon a solution for environmental changes, healthcare systems, and poverty and development the most important factor to consider would be an exact definition of “indigenous”. For example, New Zealand considers its indigenous people to be the Maori, resulting in any indigenous clauses or acts being tailored to the needs of the Maori. All solutions will vary depending on who exactly is classified as indigenous, and who deserves the rights to any solutions created.

Works Cited

"4. Policies and Measures." *Ministry for the Environment*, www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/climate-change/new-zealands-fifth-national-communication-under-united-nations-framewo-4.

"Conservation Act 1987 – New Zealand Legislation." *New Zealand Legislation*, www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0065/latest/DLM103610.html.

"Indigenous Peoples Hardest Hit by Climate Change Describe Impacts Science News."*EurekAlert!*, 2 Apr. 2008, www.eurekalert.org/pub\_releases/2008-04/unu-iph040108.php.

"Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Human Development in Latin America." *World Bank Live*, 2016, live.worldbank.org/indigenous-peoples-poverty-and-human-development-latin-america.

"Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development - Cambridge University Press." *Cambridge University Press*, 2008, www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9781107020573&ss=exc.

*Ministry of Health NZ*, 2 Nov. 2016, www.health.govt.nz/.

"Poverty and Human Rights." *Amnesty International USA*, 2016, www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/poverty-and-human-rights.

"Reality Tours » The Devastating Effects of Extractive Activities on Peru’s Indigenous Peoples." *Reality Tours*, 8 Aug. 2016, www.globalexchange.org/blogs/realitytours/2016/08/08/the-devastating-effects-of-extractive-activities-on-perus-indigenous-peoples/.

"Resource Management Act." *Ministry for the Environment*, www.mfe.govt.nz/rma.

"Status of Ratification." United Nations, 2014, unfccc.int/essential\_background/convention/status\_of\_ratification/items/2631.php.

"System-Wide Action Plan on the Rights of Indigenous People." *Welcome to the United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday/SWAP\_Indigenous\_Peoples\_WEB.pdf.

"Take Action." *UN and Climate Change*, www.un.org/climatechange/take-action/.

"Underdevelopment, Poverty of Latin America’s Indigenous Peoples." *Welcome to the United Nations*, 20 May 2011, www.un.org/press/en/2011/hr5058.doc.htm.

"United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People." *Welcome to the United Nations*, United Nations, Mar. 2008, www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\_en.pdf.

"United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change." United Nations, unfccc.int/files/essential\_background/background\_publications\_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf.

"Western European Colonialism and Colonization - Wikipedia." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc, 6 Nov. 2016, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western\_European\_colonialism\_and\_colonization. Accessed 6 Nov. 2016.

"WHO | Health of Indigenous Peoples." *World Health Organization*, 2016, www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs326/en/.