

## Update on Work at the 32nd Session of the Human Rights Council - Ending violence against indigenous women

Friends,

On June 13 – July 1, the Human Rights Council's 32<sup>nd</sup> session took place in Geneva, Switzerland. The Indian Law Resource Center participated in order to contribute to the annual full-day discussion on women's human rights and the negotiation of an annual resolution on violence against women. To advance our work and recommendations to end violence against indigenous women, we also met with a number of key states and UN staff.

### **Written and Oral Statements**

The Indian Law Resource Center joined with the Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians, National Congress of American Indians, and Native American Rights Fund to submit two written statements to inform the Council about the epidemic of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and to urge the Council to take action on this issue. The written statements were supported by four NGOs without consultative status: Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, Clan Star, Inc., National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, and Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition, Inc. The statements are available at:

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/108/77/PDF/G1610877.pdf?OpenElement> and at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/108/78/PDF/G1610878.pdf?OpenElement>.

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, during the Annual Full-Day Discussion on Women's Human Rights, the Council held a panel on violence against indigenous women and its root causes. The Center delivered a joint oral statement on behalf of the Center, NCAI, NARF, and the Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians. We highlighted statistics from the new National Institute of Justice report on violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and men and noted that a root cause of this violence is a discriminatory legal system that limits the authority of indigenous peoples to protect their women and children, and that fails to prevent and respond to these crimes. Our [attached statement](#) also recommended actions that the Council could decide to take to better respond to this injustice.

### **Annual resolution on violence against women**

Each June, the Human Rights Council adopts an annual resolution on accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women. For the very first time, the 2016 annual resolution included a focus on violence against indigenous women and girls. The Center was able to offer proposed language for this resolution during three informal consultations and the substance of several of our proposals was included. For example, the resolution now explicitly references the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and notes that in the Outcome Document, states "committed to intensifying efforts, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous peoples and individuals, in particular women . . . by strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks. . . ." The adopted resolution is [attached](#).

### **Special procedures**

The [Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice](#) and the [Special Rapporteur on violence against women](#) presented their annual reports to the Council during this session, both of which are attached. The Working Group's report covers its 2015 mission to the United States, which recommends, among other things, that the United States should: "[e]mpower Native American tribes to ensure justice in their communities through the exercise of full criminal jurisdiction within their lands" and "[i]mplement fully the VAWA 2013." The report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women notes, among other things, that discriminatory laws do little to deter perpetrators from committing these crimes and offer little recourse for victims. The Special Rapporteur will be exploring the link between discriminatory laws and violence against women and girls and making recommendations for law reforms.

### **Panel on Violence Against Indigenous Women at Upcoming 33<sup>rd</sup> Session**

The Human Rights Council's 33rd session will take place September 13-30, 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland, and will include a half-day panel on examining the causes and consequences of violence against indigenous women as called for by the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. More information on the Council's session will be posted here: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/hrcindex.aspx>. We will be in touch with more information about the panel as it becomes available. If you are interested in participating, please let us know and we can help coordinate.

Should you have questions or need more information, please let us know. Please also look for an update soon about our work to follow-up on decisions of the World Conference to secure an implementing body to monitor compliance with the UN Declaration and to enable the participation of indigenous governments at the UN.

**Jana L. Walker, Senior Attorney\***

**Indian Law Resource Center**

602 North Ewing Street  
Helena, Montana 59601  
(406) 449-2006, ext. 106

[jwalker@indianlaw.org](mailto:jwalker@indianlaw.org)

[www.indianlaw.org](http://www.indianlaw.org)

*\*Admitted in AZ, DC, MT, and NM*

**Christopher T. Foley, Attorney\* | Indian Law Resource Center**

602 N. Ewing Street | Helena, MT 59601

[cfoley@indianlaw.org](mailto:cfoley@indianlaw.org) | [www.indianlaw.org](http://www.indianlaw.org)

*\*Admitted only in PA*