



Canada

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION
ITEM 19

RIGHT OF REPLY

Mr. Chairman, the Canadian delegation makes the following short statement in reaction to that of the Grand Council of the Cree of Quebec on March 4 when the situation of indigenous people in Canada was compared to that of the black majority in South Africa. Mr. Chairman, to equate the two situations does disservice both to the struggle against apartheid and to the concerns of indigenous people throughout the world. Quite frankly, I am deeply disappointed that a delegation would use an opportunity to speak before this body to draw such a comparison. To summarize briefly key differences between Canada's native population and the black majority in South Africa: Canada's Aboriginal people are full citizens of Canada who possess the rights of all Canadians plus additional rights including the Aboriginal and Treaty Rights recognized in the Constitution; the manner in which Indian lands are held in Canada is designed to protect the land base of Indian communities while providing Indian participation in the management of their lands and resources; Canadian Indians are not required to live on reserves but some choose to do so; self-government cannot be equated to South Africa's "separate development": greater self-government is being sought by Aboriginal communities, not imposed by the government.

Mr. Chairman, through their consultative status with ECOSOC organizations like the Grand Council of the Cree of Quebec are afforded an excellent opportunity to raise international consciousness of concerns of indigenous populations throughout the world and we hope that this opportunity will not be squandered.

It is also evident from the statement by the representative of the Grand Council of the Cree of Quebec that a couple of points arising from my delegation's statement under Item 19 on February 26 require clarification. In our statement we spoke of the situation in Canada and the significance of the word "treaty". Some of our Aboriginal populations are in treaty relationships. We did not want the proposed study to be restricted only to those indigenous populations with