

PRESENTATION OF

Brian “Mike” Myers

To the symposium “INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT THE UNITED NATIONS: FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST DELEGATES TO THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE YOUNG GENERATIONS”

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OVERVIEW

The theme of my presentation to the symposium is an “environmental scan” of the conditions and issues that lead up to the first conference in 1977 and an assessment of the current situation for Indigenous nations and peoples in North America.

In 1977 I was the Coordinator responsible for identifying, contacting and coordinating the participation of representatives of Indigenous nations and peoples from North, Central and South America. I was 28 at the time, did not speak Spanish and only had some vague ideas about the world and our place in it as Indigenous nations and peoples.

This was an enormous responsibility and one of the critical turning points in my life that has impacted my views and work over the past 36 years. I remained active at the international level on behalf of the Haudenosaunee until 1988 when I decided to turn my attention to promoting and advancing the potential of international recognition and inclusion through my work with Indigenous nations, tribes and First Nations throughout North America.

I was one of the co-authors of the original draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Nations and Peoples and sat as Rapporteur during the drafting sessions that were held in Geneva up through the early 1980’s until the document was taken over by the member states. In addition to the Declaration I was one of the co-authors of the three position papers of the Haudenosaunee which we later consolidated into a book entitled: “*A Basic Call To Consciousness*” which still stands today as an influential and important delivery of an Indigenous perspective and understanding of the on-going challenges posed in Western and Indigenous relations in North America.

In 1974 I was part of the Haudenosaunee delegation that went to Wakpala in Lakota Territory to meet with other traditional governments and representatives where we developed a four prong strategy for advancing our issues and concerns, one of which was an international strategy for which the Haudenosaunee was asked to take a lead organizing role.

With regards to this presentation my preference is to do what is called an “environmental scan” of the last 36 years. As part of this scan I think it is important that we understand the historical philosophical foundations of Western ideology and its continuing impact on relations between Indigenous nations and peoples and the settler states that occupy our various countries. The scan will begin with an overview of conditions in North America in the period 1969-77 that led to the first conference and then an assessment of conditions since 1977 in the areas of political/treaty relations; economic development; socio-educational development; and cultural revitalization.

It is also important to conduct an assessment of the promise and potential of international assistance and recognition of Indigenous nations and people with a particular view towards the application of existing international laws, standards and conventions. This would include an evaluation of the potential role and place of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I would be very much open to the opportunity to have an interactive discussion with the participants.