



# Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations

The Only Multi-Racial Worldwide Indigenous Confederacy In Existence

## CARICOM member states show contempt for Indigenous Peoples AGAIN at OAS Headquarters in Washington DC; USA

*Saturday, April 21, 2012*



Once AGAIN - for the 14th consecutive time - CARICOM member States of the OAS refused to participate in the meeting at OAS headquarters in Washington DC - of negotiations in the points of consensus, on the historic Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas; April 18-20 2012. This noble effort could become even stronger than the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and WOULD be a beacon of hope for the entire world... if only certain OAS member states would stop trying to sabotage it at every opportunity they get.

As a member of the Indigenous Caucus who has been involved in these important negotiations since the year 2000, I cannot fail to highlight and congratulate the delegations of the following OAS member states from Latin America - who were strong supporters of the hopes and aspirations of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas; namely: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. These 9 countries represented half (50%) of the Latin American countries in the OAS.

In contrast, of the 14 CARICOM member states (also half/50% of whom have indigenous populations ranging from less than 1% to up to 13% of their National Populations) only the Bahamas and Guyana attended the opening session - and stayed for only 10% of the time (108 minutes) that the 18 Latin American countries' delegations (who stayed for the entire 18 hour duration of negotiations over 3 days) participated. We would have preferred that the CARICOM member states stayed and at-least 'pretended' to be interested like the 50% of Latin American states who sought every excuse to impede progress...rather than their now routine disrespectful apathy and no-show attitude towards the entire process.

I remind CARICOM that their combined Amerindian Indigenous populations exceed 150,000 persons - with 75,000 (50%) of this amount in 9 Tribal Nations residing in Guyana alone!

Belize has the second highest Amerindian population in CARICOM with 45,000 Mayan Amerindians, Suriname is third with 18,000 Amerindians and Dominica with 9,000



Amerindians of the Kalinago-Carib Tribal Nation. Belize celebrates an official 'Garifuna Day' yet the Mayas who are the actual pre-existing Indigenous people of Belize get no such official recognition. Suriname does not even officially recognize the existence of Indigenous Amerindians within its borders - yet it negotiated autonomy with the Saramakans - who usurped Amerindian territories in order to establish themselves in that country. This is a gross insult and violation of International Human Rights Laws that even the Secretary General of the OAS referred to with embarrassment at the IV Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia in April 2012 (though without naming the State directly); and Dominica still refuses to grant more land to the woefully small and inadequate Kalinago Territory in that country - or to remove the illegally imposed Dominica Police station from off the Kalinago Autonomous territory....when they could easily move this hated outpost a few hundred meters and site it OFF the officially recognized indigenous lands. Dominica has & CAN do much better than this sad state of affairs for the descendants of this great Tribal Nation who fought European colonialism in the Americas so heroically for so many centuries!

Would the weak CARICOM states prefer powerful and covetous neighbors to show their Amerindian peoples the respect they deserve? Can CARICOM afford such a political gamble in these times that we live in? Would it not be wiser and more prudent for CARICOM to be on the RIGHT side of International Laws and Conventions concerning Indigenous Peoples and be a positive example in the world - rather than being on their current WRONG side as they hide behind outdated condescending 'National Law'? Is CARICOM so bereft of legal intellectuals that they do not understand and accept that INTERNATIONAL Human Rights Law takes precedence over National Law?

I take this opportunity to remind CARICOM that they once had the praiseworthy foresight to create an 'Indigenous People's desk' within the CARICOM Secretariat - though they have never appointed anyone (and hopefully only an INDEPENDENT Indigenous person would ever be selected - we have enough 'mascots' in member states already) only too eager to take up this seat.

Having both Guyanese Lokono-Arawak and Dominica Kalinago-Carib ancestry myself, and a fearless reputation for holding flames to the feet of ALL governments who violate Indigenous Rights - AND no hesitation to offer praise to all governments who do what is equitable and just for Indigenous Peoples, as well as a reputation for championing Indigenous Rights against all odds that precedes me in every CARICOM state that has Indigenous Peoples...as well as personal recognition within the OAS and consultative status within the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues....many have said that I would be a good candidate for such a position within CARICOM....but my dear friends - it is precisely because I cannot be manipulated by the political power elites that one such as myself will NEVER be considered to fill such an important role. There are far too many 'yes-men' and women out there who 'put their mouth wherever the soup leaks' (to quote a Guyanese expression) that they would prefer to fill this role...the kind of mascots who will sing the praises of the various CARICOM governments at every local, regional and international Forum in the world and read from the political script given to them - whilst conveniently omitting facts that show otherwise.

At this 14th Session the Caribbean Indigenous Caucus was represented by Damon Corrie of Barbados, Chief Tony James of Guyana, and Evelyn Monsanto of Suriname. The three of us were honored to be included in the 20 Indigenous Representatives from the entire Hemisphere selected by the OAS to negotiate with its member Nation States - for justice and equity on behalf of all the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.



Damon Gerard Corrie

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*Registered participant in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), Member of the Indigenous Caucus of the Americas working group on the Draft Declaration of the Americas and Sole Caribbean Representative on the planning committee of the 4th Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas (ILSA) – both at the Organization of American States (OAS). CARICOM Commissioner on the Indigenous Commission for Communications Technologies in the Americas (ICCTA)*