



Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations

The Only Multi-Racial Worldwide Indigenous Confederacy In Existence

Organization of American States (OAS) 11th session Dec 6-12, 2008

DAY 1 REPORT FROM THE OAS - Saturday December 6th 2008

BAJAN NOW CO-CHAIR FOR CARIBBEAN OF THE OAS WORKING GROUP

Damon Corrie, the sometimes controversial Barbados born Indigenous Rights activist of Guyanese Arawak descent was 1 of 30 persons selected by the Organization of American States (OAS) to once again to attend the current 11th session (Dec 6-12) of negotiations on the draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; being held in the Colon Room at the OAS headquarters in Washington DC. Hard negotiations between the Indigenous representatives and the diplomatic representatives of all the member states of the OAS will be held from December 9-12th.

Of the 30 Indigenous representatives from around the Hemisphere present on day 1 (Saturday December 6th 2008) only 2 are from the Caribbean (Barbados and Puerto Rico - both belong to the United Confederation of Taino Peoples) but the Carib Chief from Dominica is expected to attend eventually. The other countries represented here directly in the Indigenous Caucus are as follows Canada 4, USA 7, Guatemala 2, Honduras 1, Nicaragua 1, Peru 1, Argentina 2, Ecuador 1, Paraguay 1, Colombia 1, Costa Rica 1, Bolivia 1 and El Salvador 4 - with 1 more from the USA, Panama, Dominica and St. Vincent expected.

On day 1 the Caucus voted for 4 Co-Chairs to head the Indigenous Caucus and the un-opposed nominated candidates were June Llorenzo of the USA (North America co-chair), Jaime Arias of Colombia (South America co-chair), Jose Carlos Morales of Costa Rica (Central America co-chair) and Damon Corrie of Barbados (Caribbean co-chair) - who was nominated by respected Taino elder Naniki Reyes Ocasio from Puerto Rico. Mr. Corrie agreed to act as Caribbean co-chair only until Carib Chief Charles Williams of Dominica arrives.

Chair of the OAS Working Group Ambassador Jorge Reynaldo Cuadros (who is also the Ambassador of Bolivia to the OAS) gave a very inspirational opening address to the caucus - where he reminded the indigenous representatives gathered that "Bolivia should be viewed as the motherland of the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere because Bolivia - with the ONLY Amerindian head of state and government in the entire Western Hemisphere - is quite literally the sharp end of the spear in the Amerindian rights struggle for equity in the Americas". In November 2008 President Evo Morales of Bolivia became the first Amerindian Head of State to have EVER addressed the OAS.

Leonardo Crippa and Armstrong Wiggins of the Indian Law Resource Center presented evidence to the gathering that attested to the fact that as Global conflict over scarce natural resources escalates, indigenous peoples have increasingly become targets of human rights violations associated with efforts to confiscate, control, or develop their lands, territories and natural resources. Many countries in the OAS project a

public image of respect for human rights while permitting and committing human rights violations at home.

The representatives were also reminded that the process to achieve the American declaration has been on-going for over 19 years, and the UN declaration took almost 21 years to finally be achieved.

There is a strong sense of hope that the incoming administration of President Barack Obama will enact real change (as was his campaign slogan) - such as finally ratifying the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is something the outgoing Bush administration strongly opposed.

Damon Corrie is in Washington as a member of the United Confederation of Taino People (www.uctp.org) representing his maternal Eagle Clan Lokono-Arawaks in Guyana as well as other communities that belong to the Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations (www.pantribalconfederacy.com) that he founded and leads.

DAY 2 AT THE OAS - DECEMBER 7th 2008

CARIBBEAN STATES FIRST MADE INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION AT THE OAS POSSIBLE

Highly respected 'Veteran' Indigenous rights activist June Lorenzo of the Laguna Pueblo Tribal Nation of the USA revealed a very interesting fact during the morning session on day two at the OAS, in 1999 at the 1st session the OAS held concerning the draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples the few Indigenous representatives who could afford to attend at their own expense were not allowed to participate in any meaningful way, they were relegated to sitting at the back of the room as observers and were allowed one 10 minute speech at the very end of the entire week.

This all changed when the then OAS Ambassador for Antigua & Barbuda (a country that does not even have an existing pre-Colombian Indigenous population) realized the wrong being perpetrated on the first peoples of the Americas and heroically gave up his seat to Hector Huerta (a Kuna from Panama) - thereby allowing the Indigenous Peoples to fully participate in all the OAS proceedings concerning the Draft American Declaration.

Subsequently the Specific Fund was established by the OAS to enable many more Indigenous representatives from all over the Western Hemisphere to be able to travel to wherever the sessions were being held in the Americas and have all their expenses provided for.

Barbados born Damon Corrie who is of Guyanese Lokono-Arawak descent is deeply interested in finding out why after first opening the door to Indigenous Peoples - have Caribbean States subsequently turned their collective backs on the entire Draft American Declaration process, as he himself has attended 6 of the 11 sessions and has only seen 3 Caribbean State representatives in attendance during his entire time at the OAS. Corrie added: "At the very least I would expect the OAS Ambassadors of Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica and Belize - all countries with existing descendants of pre-Colombian Indigenous populations, to be in attendance at every one of these sessions. Moreover, just for the very tremendously significant fact that the Caribbean was historically the first area of the Americas to suffer from the arrival of Columbus and the ensuing European invasion and colonization of the 'New World', should make the Caribbean States take interest in these modern day historic proceedings which avail them the opportunity to right some of those wrongs. Barbadians think Indigenous issues do not concern them, but this is only because they do not know their own history. Barbadians do not know that before the African Slave Trade that Barbados was the key commercial centre in the Caribbean for the Amerindian Slave trade - buying and selling & importing and exporting Amerindian captives from North

America, South America and other Caribbean islands (facts are contained in Corrie's book "The Forgotten Amerindian History of Barbados ISBN # 976-8081-0606 - available from First Nations Publications)." Corrie further stated that: "Caribbean people universally condemn the Columbus initiated genocide of Amerindian Peoples of yesteryear, and Caribbean political leaders are quite fond of the topic when it suits them, but here and now in the 21st century - when Caribbean States can actually make a huge positive difference and help the surviving remnant populations of that heinous historic injustice - they choose instead to turn their collective backs. This on-going flagrant no-show by Caribbean States at these OAS Draft American Declaration proceedings is a real source of shame and embarrassment for us Caribbean Indigenous representatives. We leave our families to travel thousands of miles to be here and try to make a positive difference in the world for ourselves and untold future generations - only to see time and time again that the Caribbean States' OAS Ambassadors who are based right here in this very building cannot even make the effort to leave their comfy offices to walk down the hall to participate.

DAY 3 REPORT FROM THE OAS - Monday December 8th 2008

BARBADOS HEADQUARTERS FOR UNIQUE WORLDWIDE INDIGENOUS CONFEDERACY

At the start of the afternoon session (2.30-6pm) today a special guest was introduced to the Indigenous Caucus, it was non-other than the world famous Chief Oren Lyons of the Six Nations Confederacy of North America.

Chief Lyons gave an inspirational five-minute address giving some background info on the three generations of Indigenous activism that he has been a principal leader of. Chief Lyons was made internationally famous in a 1985 National Geographic article featuring the Six Nations Confederacy - where he proudly displayed his Six Nations Passport, a professionally made passport that they created entirely of themselves - and which has been accepted by over 25 countries worldwide (much to the chagrin of the United States and Canadian governments).

It is a great inspiration to genuine Indigenous freedom fighters worldwide to see just how far the Six Nations have asserted their 'inherent and undeniable right to self-determination'- to use existing terminology in the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

35 year old Damon Corrie of Barbados who is himself of Guyanese Arawak descent remembered the National Geographic article from 1985 and commented: "I was a boy of 12 when I first read that article and I still have the copy, I was inspired by the Six Nations example to revive the Pan-Tribal Confederacy that my great-grandfather started over 150 years ago in Guyana with the Arawak, Akawaio and Makushi tribes, now under my leadership it has grown into the worlds only multi-racial pan-tribal confederacy with member tribal Nations in the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia and the Pacific; and all headquartered in the little Caribbean island of Barbados (www.pantribalconfederacy.com). We can't afford to produce our own passports yet, but we did produce our own ID cards, and these are being improved and re-issued with security features in the USA with the collaboration of our closes allies."

Mr Corrie also took the opportunity to voluntarily relinquish his position as Caribbean Co-Chair for the Indigenous Caucus at the 11th session of the OAS on the draft American Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples - in favor of his Caribbean compatriot, the respected Taino Elder Naniki Reyes Ocasio of Puerto Rico who had first nominated Damon to the post. Both Corrie and Ocasio are members of the United Confederation of Taino Peoples (www.uctp.org) - a very important regional organisation with representation stretching from Belize in the West to Guyana in the South and all the Spanish speaking (and several English) Islands in-between As Mr. Corrie explained: "I had only intended to temporarily fill the seat - which is normally given to our honorable elder brother the Carib Chief of Dominica, until he had

arrived; unfortunately he is not here and may not be attending this session. Tomorrow is day 4 and interaction with the State Ambassadors and representatives will begin in earnest, and since Naniki is bilingual and has more years experience at the OAS than I do; I think it best that she take charge in the Carib Chief's absence. As for myself, it was an honour to have been granted the seat, but I am happy to fill my autodidact in-house journalist role and get the news of the proceedings out to the wider world, and have the flexibility of time to meet privately with various OAS Ambassadors and lobby the cause for greater Caribbean States involvement in this process...I think that is the greatest single contribution I can make to the Caucus collectively.

DAY 4 REPORT FROM THE OAS - December 9th 2008

BOLIVIAS AMBASSADOR - A RADICAL AND UNIQUE DIPLOMAT AND INTELLECTUAL WELL LOVED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

At the official opening session this morning with OAS state Ambassadors and other officials in attendance - the dynamic Ambassador Reynaldo Cuadros of Bolivia's mission to the OAS - and who also happens to be the current Chair of the American Draft Declaration sessions opened the minds of the non-indigenous audience in attendance with his unique intellect and insight into what some of them perhaps considered to be quite controversial statements. Ambassador Cuadros said: "The OAS is incomplete, and it will NOT be complete until it has the full participation and involvement of ALL the inhabitants of the Americas, the indigenous peoples MUST be included!" He then went on to say: "What we have here is just a map of political boundaries imposed by force on the true landowners and first inhabitants of the Americas, before Columbus this Hemisphere already had organized social life, a myriad of dazzling cultures...none of which was respected, and all of who's rights, dignity and possibility to survive were NOT given any semblance of equitable treatment. 60 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we STILL do not have the full participation of Indigenous Peoples in the neo-colonial states of the Americas." The Ambassador further added: "An irresponsible lifestyle that does not encompass a balance, enshrined in a society that is organised exclusively by corporate interest - who only concern themselves with financial profit - is in fact a new kind of slavery, economic slavery, with new and re-invented forms of subjugation and mental colonisation..for example. It aims to convince indigenous people that their traditional harmonious with nature lifestyle is not the 'progressive way' to live, and is somehow 'wrong'; whilst simultaneously brainwashing the populace that a materialistic 'Western' lifestyle is the 'better' way to exist. It is truly a parasitic system that this so-called 'civilised world' spreads like contamination upon the earth. Take for example your plane ride to be here today, I am sure on the plane there was a 'first class' section, but how does one get into that section? By having and paying more money than the rest, no-one is concerned with whether you obtained this money in a moral or immoral way, legal or illegal way, they are only concerned with whether you have the money or not...what does this tell you about this way of life they promote?"

OAS Secretary Albert Ramdim of Suriname was also present and gave a brief address thanking the State and Indigenous representatives in Attendance and urging them to work together tirelessly to make progress on the Draft American Declaration of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

GUYANA MISSION LEADING CARIBBEAN INVOLVEMENT AT OAS & MEETING WITH GRENADA AMBASSADOR

DAY 5 REPORT FROM THE OAS - Wednesday December 10th 2008

Once again, Guyana is the first (and often the only) Caricom member State to make an effort to attend the OAS sessions with the Indigenous Caucus. The Indigenous Caucus was heartened by the attendance of the Mission of Guyana in the morning session today of proceedings on the Draft American Declaration, as the only member of the Indigenous Caucus representing Amerindian concerns and issues from Guyana - Damon Corrie introduced himself to Guyana's deputy Chief of Mission at the OAS and was greatly impressed by the career diplomat. Corrie commented: "This lady is full of innovative and exciting ideas for the development of Guyana and it was a real pleasure to talk with her this morning. She explained to me that unlike the other Missions who have two sets of staff to handle the workload - Guyana has only one and it is not possible to be in attendance at all times". It should be noted that the current administration of President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana has made great strides in improving the standards of living for the vast majority of Amerindians in Guyana - and this fact cannot be honestly disputed by any serious enquiry free of political bias into the current state of affairs in Amerindian communities in that south American country. Unfortunately, no other Caricom member state has yet attended any of these meetings during the current 11th session.

Damon Corrie (who is here in his official capacity on behalf of the United Confederation of Taino People www.uctp.org) had lunch today at the IMF cafeteria at the invitation of Ambassador Denneth Modeste of Grenada - who now heads the OAS Secretariat for Multidimensional Security. Corrie met the Ambassador purely by chance yesterday afternoon in the elevator at the OAS building, they knew someone in common - Mr. Roland W. Bullen a Grenadian by birth and former United States Ambassador to Guyana, struck up a brief conversation and it was then that Ambassador Modeste invited Damon to return today to meet with him over lunch.

Corrie summed up the meeting thusly: Ambassador Modeste impressed me greatly, I have never met a Caribbean Ambassador quite like him, not even remotely like him, he has a deep love for Indigenous cultures of the world and is the person behind the April festival in Grenada that is held each year that has invited the participation of Indigenous groups from all over the world. He strikes me as being of upstanding character and the highest of moral calibre, he is also extremely well connected in a myriad of fascinating ways, when you have the honour of conversing with him for over an hour - you leave with the distinct impression that you have just met the future Prime Minister of Grenada, and I firmly believe he will go down in history as being the best Grenada has ever produced."

CARIBBEAN STATE OF DOMINICA ISSUES DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT TO IT'S CARIB CHIEF

DAY 6 REPORT FROM THE OAS - Thursday December 11Th 2008

In a move that was widely hailed as a stunning breakthrough in the equitable treatment of Indigenous peoples - and being of great historical significance, the small Independent Caribbean State of Dominica (not to be confused with the Dominican Republic) - has accorded the democratically elected leader of it's indigenous Kalinago-Carib community, Chief Charles Williams, with a Diplomatic passport.

This is the first time in the history of the Americas that ANY State has EVER recognized a leader of it's indigenous peoples in such an official capacity. Whereas it may not be either feasible or financially practical for other States with multiple Indigenous leaders of multiple Indigenous communities to follow Dominica's noble example, there are at least two other Caribbean States that immediately come to mind

such as Trinidad and Tobago - and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (both with singular Indigenous ethnic groups and leadership structures) that can very easily afford to do likewise; it only requires the political will to do so by the honorable Prime Ministers' Patrick Manning (of Trinidad and Tobago) and Ralph Gonzalves (of St. Vincent and the Grenadines).

At today's session Colombia's OAS Ambassador mentioned the fact that his country was the ONLY member state of the OAS that allows the leaders of indigenous peoples to participate directly in their parliament, other countries only allow indigenous peoples to participate through a recognized political party. The Ambassador of Colombia also glanced around the table where State representatives are seated and highlighted the sad fact that "There are many Caribbean States in the OAS, over one third of membership to be precise, but NONE are attending these sessions on the Draft American Declaration - and this is having a negative impact on the efforts to achieve consensus."

For the record, the delegation of the Republic of Guyana was again the ONLY OAS member state representative from CARICOM that is making an effort to be in attendance and constructively participate in the current 11th session.

As a Barbadian by birth of Guyanese Arawak descent I feel proud to see the Guyana Mission at the table, but deeply embarrassed by the COMPLETE ABSENCE of every other Caribbean island state (not to mention Belize and Suriname with sizeable Indigenous populations) at these sessions. Every day my fellow indigenous representatives ask me why the Caribbean countries are so indifferent and unconcerned about Indigenous rights - and I can only shrug my shoulders and say "I have no idea myself."

I am hereby beseeching the Guyana Mission, Grenada's former Ambassador Denneth Modeste, and Dominica's United Nations Ambassador Crispin Gregoire - to invite their fellow CARICOM colleagues based here at the OAS Missions to make an effort to attend the final day of this session (from 10am-4pm with a 1-2pm lunch break) on Friday December 12th 2008 - so that we can end this 11th session on a truly positive note.

*Damon Gerard Corrie
Member of the Indigenous Caucus for the Caribbean Region
Reporting from OAS Headquarters
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