



COALITION OF LARGE TRIBES

Blackfeet Nation • Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe • Crow Nation • Eastern Shoshone Tribe
Fort Belknap Indian Community • Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nation • Navajo Nation • Northern Arapaho Tribe
Oglala Sioux Tribe • Rosebud Sioux Tribe • Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe
Shoshone Bannock Tribes • Spokane Tribe • Ute Indian Tribe • Walker River Paiute Tribe

Speaking at the United Nations, COLT Treasurer White Pipe Calls on the U.S. to Provide Greater Support to Indigenous Languages as part of Indian Boarding Schools Healing Work

July 21, 2023

Geneva, Switzerland - Coalition of Large Tribes Treasurer and Rosebud Sioux Tribal Councilwoman Lisa White Pipe concluded a busy week in Geneva for the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Treasurer- White Pipe offered three specific Interventions (available at www.largetribes.org). Her full statement is set forth below, echoing the issues raised by COLT Chairman Marvin Weatherwax at the United Nations Permanent Forum on the Rights of Indigenous People in New York in April. [Speaking at the United Nations, Chairman Weatherwax Calls on the U.S. to respect Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights on Reservations | Coalition of Large Tribes.](#)

Additionally, Treasurer White Pipe was a panelist at a premiere July 19 event in Geneva, *Sacred Sites and Human Rights: Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Articles on Religious Freedoms, Free Prior and Informed Consent, and Rights to Land & Water*. The event served to amplify and contribute to [EMRIP's draft report](#) entitled "Efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: establishing effective monitoring mechanisms at the national and regional levels for the implementation of the Declaration."

Ongoing and current events inspired this topic. Sacred lands and waters throughout the world are threatened by traditional extractive industries and newer efforts around 'green energy.' Whether mining copper and lithium or placing windmills on Indigenous territories, countries and companies alike are violating the rights of Indigenous Peoples by destroying their religious sites, making ceremonies impossible, and contaminating precious waters. Speakers discussed international, regional, and domestic venues for implementing the Declaration in conjunction with other laws in cases including Oak Flat (Apache, USA), Fovsen (Sami, Norway), Juukan Gorge (Puutu Kunti, Kurruma and Pinikura, Australia), and others. The panel addressed the [Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2023 Session Report](#) inviting UNESCO to "step up" its policies for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' sacred sites and calling on States to protect treaty rights to water and land. Treasurer White Pipe talked extensively about the Black Hills and land back initiatives.



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In addition to Treasurer White Pipe, speakers included:

Moderator: Kristen Carpenter, Former EMRIP Chair & Member and Professor, University of Colorado

Panelists:

S. James Anaya, Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Eirik Larsen, Political Advisor, Sámi Parliament in Norway

Hannah McGlade, Member, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Commentators: Sheryl Lightfoot, EMRIP Vice-Chair & Antonina Gorbunova, EMRIP Member

**16th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
(July 17 to 21, 2023)**

***Intervention of Lisa White Pipe, Coalition of Large Tribes; Councilwoman,
Rosebud Sioux Tribe***

Greetings, Chair and Excellencies.

I am currently a council member for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe representing the Bull Creek Community, which is in Gregory County. I was placed in this position because of the death of my father Charles White Pipe, Jr. I have lived my entire life on my reservation, except for when obtaining my bachelor's degree. My maternal grandfather, William Bearshield Sr., was a police officer, who was killed in the line of duty, and he has gained national recognition for his service. He is also a descendant of the Battle of the Little Big Horn. My paternal grandfather, Charles White Pipe Sr., received his last name because his grandfather was a carrier of the sacred White Pipe. He went on to give my Lakota name, Tatanka Ska Win, White Buffalo Calf Woman. My grandfather, Charles White Pipe Sr., was a WWII combat veteran and gained national recognition by receiving a posthumous congressional



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medal of honor as a Lakota Sioux Code Talker. Our language played an important part in saving the world in WWII.

We are very concerned about other social determinants of health on our Reservations, including public safety, missing and murdered Indigenous people, behavioral health access, and lack of healing resources to address the inter-generational trauma caused by federal Indian boarding schools, such as returning the original land taken for such schools and supporting language and culture restoration.

While the United States has made recent strides to repudiate its longstanding and widespread assimilationist Federal Indian Boarding School Policy detailed in the Department of the Interior's May 2022 *Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report*, the United States has failed to address the mass dispossession of Indians of our lands occasioned by the Indian Boarding Schools Policy even though there are federal laws on the books that **require** reversion of those lands. The Rapid City Indian Boarding School is an example among the hundreds the US funded and sanctioned. We call on the United States to make these land returns now, as the Federal Indian Boarding Schools Policy was grossly violative of Articles 8 and 10, and continued inaction perpetuates the damage caused by those violations.

Likewise, while Secretary Haaland has toured the nation listening to endless days of horror stories from Boarding School survivors and the descendants of victims, detailing physical, sexual and emotional abuse and even murder, the United States has failed to provide resources for healing. The federal government has exposed the deep wounds and Native people have an immediate and just right to healing resources under Article 11.

We call on the United States to establish an action plan to commit to concrete steps to support indigenous language programs in partnership with Tribal Nations. And to recognize the International Decade on Indigenous Languages and commit resources to commemorate the Decade. The request stems from the fact that our indigenous languages are central to our healing. Our languages tell us who we



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are and how to relate to the world. Our languages are medicine. Boarding schools cruelly beat the indigenous languages out of Native children. Restoring our languages is the start of our healing.

We call on the U.S. to take measures to support our tribes' health in these areas, including calls on member States, such as the United States, to provide adequate funding for Native law enforcement, healthcare, education and especially trauma healing, as required by federal law and Articles 11, 21 and 23 of the UN Declaration. We call for the immediate return of Federal Indian Boarding School lands to tribes consistent with Articles 10 and 11.

As a global community, it is time to provide justice, truth and reconciliation to indigenous peoples and provide much needed resources for their collective healing, starting with our languages.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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