

FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE
ON
ABORIGINAL CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

AGENDA ITEM: CHARTER OF RIGHTS OF FIRST NATIONS

SUB ITEM: EQUALITY

ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS STATEMENT

Ottawa
March 15-16, 1983

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SUB ITEM: EQUALITY

AFN STATEMENT:

The Assembly of First Nations would like to make its position clear on the issues of citizenship and an equality clause. We would like to make it clear that we agree with the women who spoke so forcefully this morning that they have been treated unjustly. The discrimination they suffered was forced upon us through a system imposed by a white colonial government through the Indian Act. It was not the result of our traditional laws. In fact it would not have occurred under our traditional laws.

We must make it perfectly clear why we feel so strongly that we must control our own citizenship. We agree completely with the United Nations Human Rights Committee decision in the case of Sandra Lovelace. The Committee recognized the legitimate and fundamental goal of tribal survival. That is our right. Any decisions on citizenship will be made by our governments with that goal in mind - and not in a racist or sexist manner. You have that assurance and we stand ready to be judged by the international community just as you have been judged.

But you cannot dictate to us what is necessary for our cultural survival. Citizenship deals with the survival of our nations, as it does with yours. It has to be our responsibility.

We would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that you table the matter of citizenship for further discussion within the on-going process.

We support, Mr. Chairman, the inclusion of an equality clause at this time under the condition that we have set out - namely that the issue of citizenship be left open for further discussion.