

Smoke Signals Radio Archive Episode 1997-02-07
Segment 3
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Dan Smoke reads a release from the Chiefs of Ontario Office in Toronto, letting listeners know that the First Nations International Court of Justice has postponed their second sitting. Composed of Indigenous judges from North America, Australia, and New Zealand, the First Nations International Court of Justice is the only legal institution unmarked by the involvement of non-Indigenous governments.

Host(s): Dan Smoke

DAN SMOKE: Aanii! Shekoli! That was **Jay Mason**, on the board of directors of the **Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples**, speaking about liberation movements all throughout the world, all throughout territories of all the colonizers, as he calls them, where Indigenous people are asserting their nationhood and wanting recognition within the United Nations as equals by being recognized as peoples, as opposed to populations. So, indeed it was an interesting talk that he did give because many people were talking about it over lunch.

I want to read to you an unfortunate situation that's developed with the **First Nations International Court of Justice**. The First Nations International Court of Justice is postponing their sitting. This comes from the Chiefs of Ontario Office in Toronto. The First Nations International Court of Justice today announced that it will postpone its second sitting, which was originally set for February 1997. The court had its inaugural sitting in Ottawa in April of 1996, when Indigenous judges from North America, Australia, and New Zealand came together to consider whether to hear allegations against Canada in the First Nations of Turtle Island against Her Majesty in the Right of Canada. Evidence on a number of counts was to be presented at the February sitting. A spokesman for the court stated that the delay is attributable to a need for further fundraising. Raising money to finance the upcoming sitting has been difficult due to increasing fiscal uncertainty within the already financially strapped First Nations communities. The First Nations International Court of Justice depends entirely on donations from individuals and organizations [inaudible] Canada, and the world. The court was counting on raising greater revenues from the sale of resource materials, which includes transcripts and video recordings of the historical first sitting. Some of you may have seen that on the CPAC channel, the parliamentary channel. There is no doubt that the testimony and preliminary judgment of the court should be of interest to academics and advocates of Indigenous peoples.

Ralph [to be transcribed], the court registrar, stated: "No other form could give as accurate a perspective on the legal and political relationship of First Nations in Canada as this court can provide. Every other legal institution that has ruled on such matters, including the Canadian courts, has done so with a strong bias against the rights of Indigenous peoples. The establishment of Aboriginal justice institutions is supported in the recently released report of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal People, which refers to judicial powers and authority as a core area of governance." Supporters of the First Nations International Court of Justice were encouraged by the tone of that report but expressed concern that the federal government will likely interpret "judicial powers" in the narrowest possible sense. Quote, "Until we can establish an international judicial forum, independent of the colonizing nations, we will never be able to bring those colonizing nations to account for the violations of human, treaty, and international rights." The Ontario regional **Chief Gordon Peters** said, "That is why we remain committed to ensuring that the First Nations International Court of Justice survives. It is the only legal

institution in existence today that is unmarked by non-Indigenous governments. That in itself makes it important.”

Organizers remain hopeful that they will be able to raise sufficient monies to support the next sitting of the court later on this year. And we will be getting information about the sitting, the second sitting of the First Nations International Court of Justice. So that is indeed unfortunate news. I was hoping that we would be able to watch it on the parliamentary channel because any events that are taking place in Ottawa are usually covered by the CPAC channel, and I wanted to get some footage from there. But unfortunately, that’s not going to happen now until later on this year. And we wish the fundraisers the best of luck. I know that they’re busy. They have an incredible amount of fundraising to do. I know, for the last, for the first sitting, they had to raise upwards of \$100,000, which they were able to do from directly as this press release says, from the donations of individuals and organizations. So, good luck to our brothers and sisters who are trying to raise that money and trying to raise awareness about what the First Nations International Court of Justice is doing.

DS: Right now, we’re going to take another musical break. We’re going to listen to **Litefoot**, a **Cherokee** rap artist who is also an actor. And this comes from his ***Good Day to Die*** album. And this is “**Tribalistic Funk**,” here on Smoke Signals.