



## **Mushkegowuk Council**

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### ***Press Release***

## **Youth delegates at UN speak on chronic underfunding of First Nations, Canada failing to meet its Treaty obligations**

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Mushkegowuk Council is lauding four youths who brought the concerns of local First Nations on an international stage this week.

Jeronimo Kataquapit, Ramon Kataquapit and Ryan Fleming from Attawapiskat, and Kohen Mattinas, a member of the Okiniwak Youth Movement who is from Constance Lake and Lac Seul were delegates at the United Nations forum on Indigenous Issues held in New York City, April 20 to May 1.

In his presentation to the UN forum, Ramon Kataquapit spoke of his home community of Attawapiskat and its proximity to the “Ring of Fire, a mineral rich area that they want to use to create international deals because of Trump's tariffs. For us, that's home but it also offsets climate change. The peatlands store massive amounts of carbon,” he said, adding, “It also holds that spirit of our people. It’s like one of the lungs of Mother Earth. And to see fast-tracked development happen there — it’s unacceptable.”

Fleming, in his presentation, spoke of Canada’s failure to fulfil its obligations under Treaty 9.

“In Mushkegowuk territory, communities like Kashechewan First Nation have faced chronic flooding for decades. Families are repeatedly displaced and homes, infrastructure and access to clean water are disrupted.”

He said, “What we are seeing is chronic underfunding, jurisdictional exclusion, and the failure to implement Treaty relationships in practice.”

Fleming noted that Canada has committed to uphold “the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ... including self-determination and free, prior and informed consent. But in our territories, those commitments are not being implemented.”

In an effort to reinforce these commitments, Fleming offered two recommendations.

“We call on Canada to implement FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent) as affirmed under UNDRIP; and second, we call on the permanent forum to recommend that member states in partnership with Indigenous peoples seek the advisory opinion to the ICJ (International Court of Justice).”

Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief Leo Friday said the four youths were articulate, presented their concerns with distinction, and provided inspiration and a sense of pride among Omushkego people.

“They spoke from the heart and from their own experiences,” said the Grand Chief. “If we can support members of Omushkego communities to present their ideas, their thoughts, their perspectives to the world at large, I think that’s an important role Mushkegowuk Council can play.”

It was during the 39th Mamowihitowin of the Omushkegowuk held in March that the Council of Chiefs agreed to provide funding to help with travel costs in support of this youth delegation who were invited to attend the United Nations forum.

*Mushkegowuk Council is a regional organization that represents the collective interests of the Kashechewan, Fort Albany, Chappleau Cree, Missanabie Cree, Moose Cree, Taykwa Tagamou and Attawapiskat First Nations in northeastern Ontario.*