

This year, Indigenous Peoples and Geneva are celebrating the centenary of the arrival of the Iroquois chief Deskaheh in the city. The event included a march and a photo exhibition.

Celebrating Indigenous struggles

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Self-determination X Clouds have replaced a blazing sun, but with temperatures remaining at their highest, some 300 representatives of Indigenous Peoples and their supporters took to the Place des Nations late yesterday. Some of those present are taking part in the session of the Human Rights Council's Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which runs until July 23 in Geneva. But the reason they came together was to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of the Iroquois chief Deskaheh Levi General in the "city of Calvin", and to inaugurate an overview exhibition.

Shortly after 6.30 p.m., everyone set off for the Indigenous Peoples March, which was to take place in Quai Wilson, and for the exhibition that will run there until mid-August. It was an opportunity, as we crossed the Botanical Gardens and walked along the lake, to meet some of them, including Christian. This young Quechua man from Peru came to Geneva three months ago to promote a start-up project linked to blockchain and tourism. "The idea is to certify indigenous works of art," he explains. For him, this is a sign "that our peoples are alive".



A Haudenosaunee delegation, including Deskaheh Steve Jacobs (center), opened the exhibition dedicated to Deskaheh Levi General. MPO

Strength in numbers

A little further on, Sara, an Ecuadoran from the Kichwa-Otavalo people, points out the importance for indigenous nations of "being where the decisions are made". She is pleased to see that "all these collective efforts are worthwhile". A view shared by Faith, Gbagi from Nigeria. During the march, she bears witness to her fight for a nation and the right to practice her

THE TORCH OF ACTIVISM

In July 1923, the Haudenosaunee chief, Deskaheh Levi General, attempted to plead his people's cause before the newly-formed League of Nations, forerunner of the UN. The Six Nations demanded that the colonizing States, with whom they had signed agreements on the use of their territories, respect them. This was the start of a long struggle that, despite some successes, continues to this day in every corner of the globe.

Despite the fact that the group was not received by the League of Nations, this visit can be seen as the starting point of the Indigenous Peoples' struggle for international recognition of their rights. And it was a long road,

since it wasn't until 2007 that the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The text has become the reference document for defending and promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. But it is only one milestone in the struggle, since the various communities still have to fight step by step on the ground to ensure that it is respected. Nonetheless, it will have enabled the Indigenous Peoples to publicize the violations committed against them. And this publicity constitutes a pebble in the shoe of States that are not always scrupulous.

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language and culture in the face of reluctant, even repressive, governments.

A repression that Mohamed fears. A Kabyle of Algerian nationality, he insists on keeping a low profile. "We defend Berber culture, which is shared by five Maghreb countries. The activist confides that the signing of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has enabled progress to be made. But much remains to be done.

Official celebrations

Guided by a Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) delegation and the Mayor of Geneva, the marchers arrived at the lakeside for the official portion of the event. Alfonso Gomez took the opportunity to recall the city's support for the cause, after the League of Nations had refused to receive Deskaheh Levi General in 1923 (see below). It was also a time for the Haudenosaunee People to reiterate their support with strength and determination: "We will never give up!"

Pierrette Birraux, former director of the Indigenous Peoples' Documentation, Research and Information Centre, insisted on "the right of peoples to self-determination".

A delegation from the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy and the town's mayor then cut the ribbon. An emotional moment for Steve Jacobs, current Deskaheh. "This exhibition shows the support we've always received here. I'm touched to see so many people at this event. It's important for our people." Not far from him, Mama Bear, chief of the clan of the same name, confirms the importance of remembering the work accomplished.

The ceremony ended with a sharing of food on tables laid out on the lawn by the water. I