



**World • Indigenous • Nations • Higher • Education • Consortium**

## **WINHEC GLOBAL INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION STATEMENT**

Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

19-30 April 2010

UN Headquarters, New York

**Agenda Item 3: Discussion of Special Theme – *Indigenous Peoples’ Development with Culture and Identity articles 3 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

### **THIS STATEMENT IS SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING WINHEC MEMBER ORGANISATIONS**

National Indigenous Higher Education Network , (NIHEN) Australia  
First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium, (FNAHEC) Canada  
American Indian Higher Education Consortium, (AIHEC) USA

### **Members of the Permanent Forum**

On behalf of WINHEC the World Indigenous Network Higher Education Consortium and its member organizations across the globe, we appreciate the opportunity to participate in this the ninth session of the UNIPFII. In line with our traditional protocols we pay respect to the Indigenous Elders and Traditional Owners present and past, to the Members of the Permanent forum and to our political and Indigenous colleagues in attendance.

In accordance with Human Rights Council Resolution 9/7, and complimented by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its two first reports (A/HRC/10/56 and A/HRC/12/32); Expert Mechanism’s study on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the implementation on the rights of indigenous peoples to education (A/HRC/33); the Human Rights Council Resolution decisions in A/HRC/12/L.33 regarding Human Rights and indigenous peoples, Articles 29 & 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 13 & 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Economic Social Council paper E/C.19/2010/14 WINHEC and its member organizations have joined together to prepare this statement that contains within its text our concerns, our goals and our aspirations for the protection , preservation and promotion of our most precious commodity. In line with the aforementioned articles, we view our culture as our most precious commodity which is inclusive of our languages, our knowledge, our cultural

values and our systems of lore, all of which is encompassed within Indigenous education.

In line with Article 14 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples we have come together as a collective of Indigenous people to develop and advance a global movement that protects the inherent rights of our people to establish and control our own educational systems and institutions in a manner that is appropriate to the protection of our languages, our spiritual connection to our land and to our cultural methods of teaching and learning. We as a global movement of Indigenous educators strive to protect and secure the rights of our children and adults for access to a level of education that is free of discrimination and that which is comparable to that of their non-Indigenous counterparts, both within our own education systems and those provided by the State.

In accordance with the theme of this year's Permanent Forum, we view educational access and outcomes as integral to addressing many of the economic, social and political issues that continue to hamper and impede Indigenous well-being and development across the globe.

Education can be a vehicle for protecting and promoting our cultures and the self determining interests of our future generations. Education for Indigenous peoples should no longer be ignored or subjected to policies developed by States without the appropriate inclusion of Indigenous representation.

As highlighted in the discussion of the International Expert Group meeting of 12 to 14 of January 2010 in New York we agree with the statement that implemented "dominant models of development have compromised Indigenous people in every aspect of their daily lives and generated poverty and severe inequality, massive environmental devastation and the violation of human rights." We further agree with the Expert Forum that "this has contributed to a serious rupture to the fabric of social life in Indigenous communities and ignored Indigenous peoples' own governance, economic, social, education, cultural, spiritual and knowledge systems and the natural resources that have sustained them through the generations". Indigenous populations concerned with colonization and its impact on the preservation of natural resources, governance, health, language, cultural knowledge and education systems are collaboratively engaging in processes to address these issues. WINHEC and its global organizational members have positioned themselves as a viable vehicle to work alongside Indigenous populations to assist the United Nations and the Permanent Forum to confront these challenges.

WINHEC has developed a set of operational goals and objectives that promote and endorse the right of all Indigenous peoples across the globe to exercise our basic human rights and freedom to enjoy access and educational participation, be it within western or Indigenous systems.

The Members of WINHEC are committed to the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to access Multilingual/multicultural or bicultural education with the emphasis on the preservation, protection, provision and promotion of Indigenous language and knowledge systems. WINHEC is also committed to the promotion of Indigenous scholarship through the development of culturally appropriate programs and policies,

be they within western education systems or community based institutions. WINHEC welcomes an opportunity to assist the permanent forum in undertaking an international scoping exercise in identifying and defining good practice in Indigenous Education.

Last year we reported that our Chair attended the Expert Panel on Indigenous Rights: Intervention on the UN declaration on Indigenous Rights meeting in Geneva and as a result he highlighted the need for the United Nations to develop a policy on the important aspects that constitute good practices in Indigenous education. With the increasing call by nation states, globally, to develop collaborative partnerships within Indigenous communities and to engage in a dialogue with Indigenous leaders, the request to develop a set of guidelines that define “good practice” has now become all the more imperative.

The need to identify principles that underpin good practice is critical to the goal of increasing the involvement of Indigenous peoples in the development and implementation of policies and programs for and about Indigenous issues within the western education system. WINHEC considers that the development of guidelines of “good practice” must be prefaced by an international scoping exercise by the United Nations to identify principles and practices undertaken by nation states where there has been positive impact on the social, education and cultural well-being of communities. These issues must be assessed and examined within the spirit of good practice for any initiatives that are designed to develop programs and policies, as they pertain to education, cultural knowledge or language enhancement initiatives for Indigenous peoples.

We consider that one of the most important challenges facing Indigenous people today is the availability of an education system that is inclusive of programs that are culturally astute, engages the input of Elders and Indigenous educators and facilitates the retention and development of their children’s cultural heritage, integrity and sense of self esteem.

The compulsory embedding of studies for and about Indigenous populations within western education systems continues to be a protracted concern within Indigenous education that is yet to be appropriately addressed. Integral to this debate is the need for the Permanent Forum to develop a policy that addresses the need for Indigenous peoples to be included in the development of such initiatives to ensure that the cultural integrity and worth of the policies and programs developed are respected, valued and retained.

Across the globe, Indigenous peoples are still being confronted by a western education system that continues to show little respect for the scholarship of Indigenous cultures, languages, knowledge’s and knowledge systems that are vital to the development of competent graduates and a culturally safe learning environment for Indigenous students.

We are delighted to advise that WINHEC is comprised of a collective of international organizations and members committed to addressing the disparities and barriers that continue to deny Indigenous peoples the right to education. It is pleasing to note that WINHEC and its member organizations have already demonstrated significant

accomplishments in addressing these issues. We record that all member organizations of WINHEC are in full support of this objective. We should also report that there have been major accomplishments gained by Indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, in Sápmi across the Nordic countries (Saamiland), and Taiwan in developing community based initiatives addressing the education of their children making significant gains across all levels of education for their people. A number of our member organizations have established Indigenous schools and colleges that are as academically and administratively robust as those institutions within the western education system. However, unlike the western academy, these Indigenous schools and colleges include curriculum policies and programs that produce graduates more likely to be culturally competent and astute. All of these initiatives have been within the spirit and principles that underpin a number of international instruments developed by the UN.

WINHEC in its own right has established a significant track record in addressing the concerns of Indigenous education. In our statement last year to the Permanent Forum we reported on a number of initiatives that WINHEC has developed. These included an international cultural accreditation/affirmation system and a number of working parties to develop guidelines and programs around Indigenous knowledge, research and curriculum for and about Indigenous populations. The accomplishment of these initiatives can be accredited to the contributions of our member organizations that form our global network of Indigenous educators and others involved in the education of Indigenous peoples.

One of WINHEC's primary goals is to establish a platform that encourages member states across the globe to work with their respective Indigenous populations in an effort to address those cultural, systemic and ideological barriers that continue to exist within their own education systems. We would welcome the opportunity to work alongside the Permanent Forum to develop of a set of protocols and guidelines addressing this objective.

WINHEC together with its member organizations seek to work with the Permanent Forum to accomplish the respective international instruments that make reference to Indigenous economic, cultural, social and educational well-being. The successful accomplishment of this task is strengthened by our collective experiences in:

1. Implementing relevant programs that facilitate success in addressing the educational needs of Indigenous communities across a global education network.
2. Overcoming barriers for Indigenous people to provide access to and achievement through quality higher education.
3. Providing leadership and vision in developing new and culturally astute solutions to historical concerns pertinent to Indigenous education
4. Developing programs and policies that are community responsive and restores culture and revitalizes language; and strengthens the identity of students through the recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems.

The accomplishments of WINHEC and its member organisations have much to offer nation states seeking to find a more effective way of addressing the educational needs of Indigenous populations. Member organisations of WINHEC have demonstrated

their capacity to unify Indigenous populations, build community potential and to develop programs and policies that are portable and globally responsive to addressing Indigenous peoples' potential and rights to education.

WINHEC seeks to expand our networks of contact and to deliver appropriate programmes to communities and people through the network of institutions involved in USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, Hawaii, the Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and in Saamiland where we have our International Headquarters.

We submit this intervention on behalf of WINHEC and its member organisations in the hope that we can achieve the collaboration of the Permanent Forum to develop policies that facilitates a global movement addressing the ongoing barriers to education for Indigenous people; that protect our intellectual and cultural rights and improves our right to access education within the spirit as outlined in international documents such as the International Declaration of Human Rights and the International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

WINHEC makes the following recommendations -

***Rec No 1***

*That the UN develop a set of international standards that protect Indigenous identity, language, knowledge systems, intellectual and cultural property rights.*

***Rec No 2***

*That the UN develop a process that formalizes the recognition of scholarship that underpins Indigenous knowledge's and knowledge system, research methodologies and theoretical frameworks.*

***Rec No 3***

*That the Permanent Forum undertake a global scoping to identify good practice in terms of Institutions, policies and programs that act to strengthen and retain the cultural integrity of local Indigenous populations*

*That the Permanent Forum identify examples of good practice in policies and programs in western and community based education systems that have a positive impacts on the well being, confidence, esteem and development of Indigenous local communities.*

***Rec No 4***

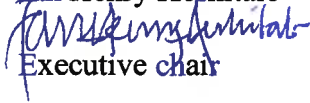
*That an opportunity be made available for WINHEC to engage in further representations with the Permanent Forum and the Human Rights Council of the UN to discuss the work of this global network further.*

Prepared by WINHEC Co-Chair Professor Boni Robertson

On behalf of

World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium

Jan Henry Keskitalo



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