

THE WORLD INDIGENOUS NATIONS HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM - WINHEC

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ABSTRACT

In August of 2002 in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada a group of Indigenous Educators in higher education came together to give form to a new organisation called WINHEC. WINHEC stands for the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium.

The WINHEC meeting in Canada was held in the midst of the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education and was the culmination of work and discussions that had been going on for almost ten years. To the participants who represented indigenous peoples from Alaska, Australia, Canada, Hawai'i, New Zealand, Sámi land and mainland USA, it seemed that the time was right for this kind of group to come together to provide an international forum and support for Indigenous Peoples to pursue common goals through higher education.

This group developed the “**DECLARATION ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HIGHER EDUCATION**” now commonly referred to as the WINHEC Charter. It outlines the vision, purpose and goals of WINHEC and was signed on a beautiful evening on August the 5th 2002, upon Mother Earth, amid celebration and song.

BACKGROUND

While WINHEC was officially launched in Canada in 2002 in association with the World's Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE), the concept and the desire to form a world indigenous higher education body was not new. A number of meetings and discussions over the years had taken place to ascertain whether the concept was worth pursuing. Most of the discussions revolved around the need to meet, to provide a forum, to advance the educational rights of indigenous peoples, to create an accreditation body, to provide for the sharing of knowledge through exchanges of various types and to advance the aspirations of indigenous peoples including the maintenance of indigenous languages, spirituality and culture.

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA 1993

In 1993 at the University of Alaska, an international conference on Higher Education and Indigenous People was held. This group resolved to call on UNESCO to establish a

Working Party to examine the issues associated with higher education and indigenous peoples, including the maintenance of languages, spirituality and cultures and the establishment of a Higher Education Qualification Authority.

WIPCE CONFERENCE 1996 & 1999

The idea of forming an International Indigenous Higher Education Consortium including the development of an international accreditation system for indigenous programs and institutions were discussed at the 1996 and 1999 WIPCE Conferences.

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM PROPOSAL IN 2000

Over time, discussions led to the development of a proposal by Dr Ray Barnhardt of Alaska and Sonny Mikaere of Aotearoa in the year 2000. Their proposal outlined the need for the development of an international accreditation system for indigenous programs and institutions.

DEVELOPING RELATIONS BETWEEN AIHEC AND WĀNANGA 2001 AND 2002

In 2001 Wānanga were invited to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. AIHEC is the association of tribal colleges in the United States of America.

Some representatives from Wānanga in New Zealand were able to attend and the main aim of the visit was to develop positive relationships with each organisation. In turn AIHEC was invited to visit New Zealand in 2002. .

In March 2002 a group of AIHEC representatives came visited the three Wānanga of New Zealand. The visit was very successful and Memorandums of Understanding were signed between institutions to foster and continue good relationships of mutual benefit to both Tribal Colleges and Wānanga.

Further discussions were held on the concept of an indigenous higher education body. A draft concept paper was written. Again the call was made to enhance spiritual beliefs, culture and languages, an international qualification system and improved social and economic development of indigenous communities.

Discussion also introduced the need to ensure that indigenous people kept up with the latest state of the art technology and communication links. The meeting was also reminded of the need to keep in touch with its native tribal communities especially with elders. The draft concept paper that was produced formed an important part of the conversations at Calgary August 2002.

CANADA

Discussion in Canada gave form to a vision, mission and goals for WINHEC.

VISION

The vision of WINHEC as stated in the Charter is as follows:

“We gather as Indigenous Peoples of our respective nations recognising and reaffirming the educational rights of all Indigenous Peoples. We share a vision of Indigenous Peoples of the world united in the collective synergy of self determination through control of higher education. Committed to building partnerships that restore and retain indigenous spirituality, cultures and languages, homelands, social systems, economic systems and self-determination”.

MISSION AND GOALS

WINHEC provides an international forum and support for Indigenous Peoples to pursue common goals through higher education.

We agree to:

1. Accelerate the articulation of Indigenous epistemology (ways of knowing, education, philosophy, and research);
2. Protect and enhance Indigenous spiritual beliefs, culture and languages through higher education;
3. Advance the social, economical, and political status of Indigenous Peoples that contribute to the well-being of indigenous communities through higher education;
4. Create an accreditation body for indigenous education initiatives and systems that identify common criteria, practices and principles by which Indigenous Peoples live;
5. Recognize the significance of Indigenous education;
6. Create a global network for sharing knowledge through exchange forums and state of the art technology ; and
7. Recognize the educational rights of Indigenous Peoples.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

WINHEC supports the following Articles of the 1993 United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article #13,

Indigenous Peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have

access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of human remains.

Article #14,

Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

Article #15,

Indigenous peoples have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All Indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. Indigenous children living outside their communities have the right to be provided access to education in their own culture and language. States shall take effective measures to provide appropriate resources for these purposes.

Article #16,

Indigenous peoples have the right to have the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations appropriately reflected in all forms of education and public information. States shall take effective measures, in consultation with the Indigenous peoples concerned, to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous peoples and all segments of society.

In addition the WINHEC supports the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1994).

Further, the Consortium supports the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Rights on Education (1999) in the belief that Indigenous People have the Right to be Indigenous.

WINHEC EXECUTIVE BOARD

STRUCTURE

The WINHEC Executive Board has an Executive Chairperson and two Co-chairpersons. In addition each participating Nation has two seats on the Board except for Canada and USA which each have four seats. The Executive Board also has the discretionary power to allocate additional special seats.

The Executive Chair and Head Office of WINHEC are held for a three year term by one of the participating Nations. The first term was held by New Zealand situated at Te Wānanga

o Aotearoa's Porirua Campus. The Executive Board also meet annually in one of the participating Nations.

Members of WINHEC currently represent Alaska, Australia, Canada, Hawai'i, Sámi land, New Zealand and the mainland United States. In the main they are representative of Indigenous Higher Education Institutions such as Wānanga, Tribal Colleges, Cultural Universities and Associations of such institutions.

FOUNDING MEMBERS

The Founding Members of the WINHEC Executive Board formed in Canada in 2002 are listed below. Many of these people still serve on the current Board. There are others who initially served as interim members and have been replaced by representatives chosen by their respective nations, and there have also been those who have resigned from the Board. The current Board acknowledges with gratitude the valuable and historical contribution to the formation of WINHEC that all past members of the Board have made.

Turoa Royal – Executive Chairperson, Te Wānanga- o-Raukawa, Otaki, Aotearoa

Lionel Bordeaux – Co-Chairperson, Sinte Gleska University, South Dakota, USA

Rongo Wetere – Co-Chairperson, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Aotearoa

Ray Barnhardt – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska

Merritt Helfferich - Consortium for Alaska Native Higher Education, Alaska

Cheryl Stephens - Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi. Whakatāne, Aotearoa

Vincent Knox – GUMURRII Centre, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Charlie Broadwater - GUMURRII Centre, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Richard Jenkins - Nechi Training, Research & Health Promotions Institute, Edmonton, Canada

Peter Hanohano - Native Hawaiian Education Council, Hawai'i

VerlieAnn Leimoni Malina-Wright - Native Hawaiian Education Council, Hawai'i

Tom Davis - Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College, Minnesota, USA

Della C. Warrior - Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, USA

Ron McNeil - Sitting Bull College, North Dakota, USA

James Shanley - Fort Peck Community College, Montana, USA

Marit Myrvoll - Norway/Saamiland

PARTICIPANTS IN FORMATION MEETING

Shirley DeFoe – Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College, Minnesota, USA

Schuler Houser – Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, USA

WINHEC ACHIEVEMENTS

In the short time of its existence, WINHEC has:

- Established and funded an international Head Office in New Zealand and has selected an Executive Chairperson and appointed administration staff. This is possible by the contributions of funds; facilities and staff from the New Zealand based Māori Tertiary Institutions – Wānanga.
- Generated a wide array of project and working group to give effect to its aspirations and goals.
- Met annually: in New Zealand November 2002, Hawai’i August 2003, and in Brisbane August 2004. This years meeting was held in Hamilton just prior to the WIPCE conference.
- Met in the USA as a follow up to Brisbane in September 2004 in Washington DC, and in conjunction with the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian.
- Attended the AIHEC president’s fall meeting in Phoenix Arizona October 2004 to update members, to attend the National Indian Education Association’s annual conference and to plan for WINHEC 2006 in Fond du Lac Minnesota.
- Established an accreditation body to quality assure member organisations using indigenous cultural processes and standards.
- Published an accreditation handbook and guidelines.
- Achieved the first 3 WINHEC programme accreditations, which were ratified in Brisbane 2004.
- WINHEC aims to grow through collaboration and consultation on a worldwide basis and plans for the future to extend its projects and working groups in the following areas.
 - Communications including technology and e-learning
 - Immigration and Educational/Cultural Exchanges
 - Distance Learning and Telecommunications
 - Public Relations and Publicity
 - Research and publication of a Journal
 - International Funding
 - WINHEC Accreditation Authority
 - Indigenous Studies
 - Collaborations in conferences and education forums
 - Development teams to transfer learning programmes and resources between members
 - Cultural exchanges

- Indigenous Studies
- Commercial and licensing projects
- Indigenous Knowledge Management
- Work with the United Nations.

THE FUTURE FOR WINHEC

As a relatively new organisation WINHEC has made some remarkable achievements so far and has a clear vision, mission and goals.

There is still much work to be done for example:

- Consolidating its position and developing the infrastructure of WINHEC at both the International and “Member Nation” levels to allow for growth and development;
- Clarify guidelines for new membership;
- Support, encourage and fund WINHEC project and working groups to advance their work;
- Increasing the profile of WINHEC and secure support from funding groups who share the same vision for indigenous education.

The work needed to bring the vision and goals of WINHEC to fruition is a huge challenge but all who have been involved believe in the potential and possibilities of WINHEC – an organisation where Indigenous People of the world are united in the collective synergy of self determination.