



CONFERENCE STATEMENT

The Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference was held in Melbourne 8–10 November.

The Conference asserts that Indigenous peoples across the world have the right to self-determination, as expressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The right to self-determination underpins the right to health.

The truth about Indigenous peoples must be told, heard and known, for justice to ensue. Only then can we achieve genuine reconciliation.

The experience of Indigenous peoples the world over, is a shared experience of colonisation. The conference heard that the primary goal of colonisation was about ‘killing the spirit of Indigenous peoples’ – as evidenced through the theft of land, language and culture.

We are all responsible for knowing the historical trauma and the continuing impacts that trauma has on Indigenous peoples today. This requires decolonisation of everyone’s thinking and of attitudes, in order to reset the relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people. Indigenous intellect, knowledge, values, practice and ceremony must be at the forefront of solutions to Indigenous issues.

We honour our ancestors’ resilience, strength and wisdom. In this moment in time, our obligation is to our future generations. As Indigenous peoples, we ask ourselves: What kind of ancestor did my own ancestors want me to be? What kind of ancestor do I want to be? What kind of ancestor do I want my children to be?

The conference was based on three themes – Identity, Knowledge and Strength. The conference states that:

Identity

- Indigenous peoples must be recognised as such
- The importance of culture in continuing our strength and resilience must be recognised
- Indigenous peoples share common experiences but also diversity across and within

Knowledge

- Indigenous thinking, intellect, wisdom must be valued
- We must decolonise the research process. Indigenous peoples are the leaders in the research in relation to our own people. Any Indigenous research must primarily and directly be for the benefit of Indigenous people.

Strength

- We must be fully empowered to exercise the right to self-determination over our own lives
- We must change the pathway, directed by Indigenous peoples, to deliver a promising future for our children.

CALL TO ACTION:

- We call on everyone to ensure that we grow strong Indigenous children into strong and healthy adults able to reach the full potential of their lives. For this to happen, we must
 - Have a new and different way of working together
 - Enable Indigenous children to have cultural security and strong identity
 - Enable Indigenous children to have access to have culturally secure early childhood education
 - Enable Indigenous people to measure and monitor our progress.
- We call on all governments to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- We call on all nations and their citizens to know the truth in relation to Indigenous peoples, and to act on that truth
- We call on all governments to support the goals that have been identified by Indigenous peoples. This requires proper resourcing and long term commitment to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.
- We call on governments to resource, to fund and to commit to Indigenous Institutions at all levels. Indigenous institutions need to lead the way in supporting Indigenous Peoples to achieve health and wellbeing.
- We call on all governments to establish cultural models of care, and for Indigenous peoples to define our own success and how we measure that success.
- We call on all to protect the land to which we belong. Only when the land is healed, can we achieve true health and wellbeing.

Furthermore, the Conference stands by, and with, Standing Rock Sioux in its opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States of America.

10 November 2016

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