



**MOTION: That the IFSW General Meeting affirms the establishment of an Indigenous Committee within the structure of IFSW to address indigenous social work practices and knowledges. The Committee is to work collaboratively with the IFSW, the United Nations Indigenous Committee Delegates and to assist with policy statements of IFSW.**

### Rationale:

The establishment of an Indigenous committee within the structure of IFSW is an extension of the decision made at the General Assembly meeting in Adelaide in October 2004, where the General Assembly adopted a **Policy on Indigenous People**. That adoption was widely celebrated amongst the indigenous social work community.

- It validated a number of indigenous social work developments.
- It confirmed that social workers should not assume that western/colonial ideals, or the norms of the dominant cultures, best serve the indigenous populations.
- It stated that Indigenous social workers can play an essential role in defining problems and developing solutions for indigenous peoples.
- It also stated that Indigenous social workers should take the lead in developing initiatives and services for indigenous peoples.

Indigenous social workers celebrated that policy. They met at the conference following the meeting to discuss how this policy could be utilised to strengthen the indigenous social work identity both professionally and in practice. The outcome was the holding of the 1<sup>st</sup> *'Indigenous Voices in Social Work: Not Lost in Translation'* conference in Hawaii in May 2007 hosted by the University of Hawai'i.

At a national level, the Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Workers Association in Australia and the Aboriginal Social Workers Society in Manitoba, Canada led the challenge to assert their identity as indigenous peoples within the social work profession.

The uniqueness of the indigenous voice within the social work profession was confirmed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> *'Indigenous Voices in Social Work: Indigenous Knowledges: Resurgence, Implementation and Collaboration'* conference in 2013 organised by the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. At that conference, a resolution (attached) was endorsed by social workers from eleven countries, though not all members of an identifiable social work association, their identity as indigenous people drew them to the conference and to supporting the resolution.

In recognition of the resolution, the establishment of an indigenous committee within IFSW would address the issue of indigenous representation within IFSW and assist with policy statements of IFSW, UN and elsewhere.

## **Resolution seeking ratification of the IFSW's position regarding the voice of Indigenous Social Workers**

PROPOSED BY members of the **Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association of Aotearoa (TWSWA)** (New Zealand) and the **National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Workers Association (NCATSISWA)** (Australia) and the **Aboriginal Social Workers Society (ASWS)** Manitoba, Canada.

We submit to delegates present at this, the 2nd "*International Indigenous Voices in Social Work*" Conference, held July 8-11, 2013, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada the following resolution seeking ratification of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) policies regarding equal status for indigenous social work, indigenous social workers and indigenous social work associations:

To the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Social Workers:

- Whereas Indigenous peoples globally suffer greatest from the consequences of historic injustice, including colonization, dispossession of their lands, territories and environmental resources, oppression and discrimination;
- Whereas indigenous people lack control over their intellectual and spiritual resources inclusive of language;
- Whereas indigenous peoples rights to increase capability are denied by colonial and modern states in the pursuit of capitalist economic growth with the results of widening disparities in health and wellbeing; educational and employment potential and political participation;

Be it resolved that:

We, the Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association of Aotearoa, the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Workers Association and the Aboriginal Social Workers Society, hereby appeal to the International Federation of Social Workers to adopt the following actions in respect to its *Policy on Indigenous Peoples*:

That the IFSW:

1. Ratify its membership/affiliate policies to give equal recognition and representation to Indigenous Social Worker Associations that have legitimate and autonomous rights and status within their respective countries;
2. Support the establishment of an Indigenous Social Work Caucus Committee to represent the voices and views of indigenous social workers and indigenous social work associations on policy and governance matters;
3. Assign to its Executive Board representation of an Indigenous Social Work voting member, to be elected by indigenous Social Worker Associations, to provide voice in addressing issues and concerns relevant to indigenous social workers and their communities;
4. In actioning Points 1, 2, & 3 above, seeks special consultative status to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

We maintain the above resolution affirms not only the IFSW's policy statements acknowledging that, "indigenous peoples are entitled to rights and dignities equal to all other peoples", and that "indigenous peoples must be actively involved participants in the creation of international policies, especially those affecting them" but, supports the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We also contend this ensures the indigenous social worker voice is equally represented at national, regional and international levels.