



Aotearoa New Zealand

IFSW Co-ordinating Body



Executive Summary – Background Paper IFSW Indigenous Commission Motion

Over the years there has been considerable debate and discussion regarding the establishment of an Indigenous Group within the structure of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). The Executive Leadership Team of IFSW and Federation members considers it vital that indigenous social work and bodies of knowledge, are valued and acknowledged as credible methods of knowing and doing by the international social work profession. To progress this work the Executive Leadership Team asked the newly formed Indigenous Committee (IC) which comprised of representatives from each region to consider effective mechanisms and strategies to strengthen the status and influence of indigenous social work, bodies of knowledge, perspectives, and indigenous associations within IFSW.

With this focus, the IC met in Calgary, Canada, October 2019. Members were briefed on the purpose of the meeting, and also on the current structure, by the IFSW President and Secretary General.

The IC considered carefully several methods and structures that could be used to provide indigenous perspectives to the Executive Leadership Team and Groups. The merits and risks were debated and considered. After considerable discussion the IC decision was that an International Indigenous Commission is the most effective structure to influence and guide IFSW strategies, policies, practices, and decisions. This decision was unanimous.

The IC was firm that any such structure must be lasting and enduring. It also has to be at a level that is able to influence and advise on IFSW matters. The IC also believes it is important to have the support of IFSW membership organisations. Taking account of these factors, the IC respectfully asserts that the establishment of an International Indigenous Commission is the most effective and enduring structure for indigenous matters, bodies of knowledge, values and beliefs to be raised and addressed within IFSW.

The Indigenous Committee Report includes the background, IFSW Policy Statement on Indigenous peoples (2012), IC draft Terms of Reference, IC strategic goals and action plan (2020-2026). For completeness appendices are documents which record the key moments in time of the journey to establish an Indigenous structure within IFSW.