



Indigenous Commission 2020

**Humankind has not woven the web of life
We are but one thread within it**

**Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves
All things are bound together**

All things connect

Chief Seattle
LEADER OF THE SUQUAMISH AND DUWAMISH NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES (1854)

Introduction

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, bodies of knowledge, practice models and theories 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 welcomed and briefed on the purpose of the meeting, and also on the current structure, and role of IFSW Committees and Commissions by the IFSW President and Secretary General. The IC gained an in-depth understanding of the function and impact of these groups, particularly in regard to influencing social and economic policies, strategies and human rights matters. The sharing of information provided a solid and constructive foundation for the IC to debate and consider processes and methods that indigenous views and perspectives may be applied to matters deliberated by IFSW.

Throughout the discussions, the IC were mindful that the Executive Leadership Team were unambiguous in their support to have indigenous perspectives across all IFSW current and future policies, direction and decision-making. 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 of formalising an International Indigenous Committee and Indigenous Commission were debated. Having considered the factors carefully, the 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.

A key factor that influenced the IC was the understanding that IFSW Committees may be established and dis-established at any time, that unless explicitly sought, a Committee has no mandate to influence, advise or support the Executive Leadership Team of IFSW, and that

Committees have no ‘special’ status, nor speaking rights at the United Nation’s Permanent Forum. 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 bodies of knowledge, values and beliefs to be raised and addressed within IFSW.

The IC acknowledges that establishing an International Indigenous Commission will be a significant milestone for IFSW. It is a courageous decision and one that will move IFSW towards being a more inclusive membership association. The formation of an International Indigenous Commission will provide hope to indigenous social work associations that indigenous bodies of knowledge, values and beliefs will be present and can influence matters that concern IFSW over time and circumstance.

The IC submits that an International Indigenous Commission will have the mandate to advise, support, and provide a unique view to the IFSW Executive Leadership Team, Committees and other Commissions on matters important to members, including indigenous members. Furthermore, it will be a demonstration that the commitment IFSW and its member associations have to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) and that the IFSW’s policy on Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights (2012) is lasting.

The IC acknowledges the opportunity to present the recommendation and motion to the IFSW General Assembly Meeting, July 2020, to establish an International Indigenous Commission.

History

The journey to Calgary 2020 began in 2004 at the IFSW General Meeting in Adelaide, Australia where IFSW endorsed their Policy on Indigenous People¹.

Following the 2004 General meeting in Adelaide, the IFSW conference was held. It was during this conference Indigenous peoples met informally and determined that a conference be organized specifically for Indigenous social workers to share their indigenous knowledges and to discuss indigenous-specific issues. These discussions led to the first Indigenous Voice in Social Work conference being held in Makaha, Oahu, Hawaii in June 2007. The conference was hosted by the University of Hawaii. Subsequently, the notion that an indigenous voice at an IFSW Executive level should be considered was raised by the Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association (TWSWA), the indigenous Association of Social Workers in Aotearoa NZ.

TWSWA developed, then took a resolution to the second Indigenous Voices in Social Work conference in Winnipeg, Canada in July 2013 where it was endorsed by a significant majority (Appendix A). In recognition of the resolution and to progress the tenets of the IFSW Policy on Indigenous People, a motion to establish an Indigenous Committee (IC) to address the issues of indigenous representation within IFSW and to assist and provide guidance on policy development and guidelines documents of IFSW a motion was put tabled at the IFSW General Assembly meeting in Melbourne, Australia in 2014. The motion was passed by the attendant member representatives (Appendix B)

The progress on indigenous representation was taken to the third International Indigenous Voices in Social Work conference, 2015 held in Darwin, Australia for endorsement. It was proposed that firstly, the IFSW Constitution be changed to allow for indigenous representation, and secondly, that the Terms of Reference for an Indigenous Committee be developed. The proposal was agreed and was unanimous.

In 2016, the Terms of Reference for an Indigenous Committee were presented to the IFSW General Assembly in Korea (Appendix C). The terms of reference was adopted by member

¹ IFSW Policy on Indigenous People

countries present. Constitutional changes were left for the Indigenous Committee to consider once it was established.

In December 2018, to progress the implementation of both the establishment of an Indigenous Committee and the Terms of Reference, a proposal was presented to the IFSW (Appendix D) which was accepted and approved by the IFSW Executive.

The inaugural Indigenous Committee meeting was held in Calgary, September/October 2019. The Indigenous Committee members who attended the meeting were Hazel Berg (North America), Linda Ford (Asia Pacific) Margaretha Uttjek (Europe), and Jenny Linares Vera (Latin America and the Caribbean). Janestic Twikirize (Africa) was unable to attend. The global co-coordinators were Robyn Corrigan and Shannon Pakura (Aotearoa/NZ).

The outcome of that meeting was the unanimous decision to progress and prepare a motion for the IFSW General Meeting, 2020, Calgary, to establish an Indigenous Commission.

IFSW POLICY STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The IFSW policy on Indigenous Peoples has been in place since **23 February 2012**. The policy supports the principles of the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2008 (*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, March, 2008).

IFSW recognizes that human rights are fundamental for all persons, as individuals and within collectives.

- Indigenous persons and groups are entitled to these fundamental human rights.
- As oppressed indigenous groups, they are to be given special consideration, based upon an understanding of the conditions that have led to their displacement and economic upheaval, as well as the loss of their political and social rights and human dignity.
- IFSW affirms that indigenous peoples are entitled to rights and dignities equal to all other peoples.
- All peoples have the right to be different and consider themselves unique.
- All peoples, despite these differences, have the right to be treated free of prejudice that is based upon national origin, race, ethnicity, and/or religion.
- Those policies that do not respect these rights to equality are racist, socially unjust and scientifically false.

IFSW believes that international social and economic policy must reflect these human rights and protect all peoples.

- Indigenous peoples must be actively involved participants in the creation of international policies, especially those affecting them.
- Social and economic policies must acknowledge and incorporate the diverse and/or unique needs of indigenous peoples (while avoiding any tendency towards apartheid).
- All those who use the indigenous customary knowledge should include measures that promote, protect and recognize this knowledge as the intellectual and cultural property of the indigenous peoples.

IFSW advocates discussion and agreement between governments, the United Nations and indigenous peoples.

- The United Nations and governments at all levels must take into account the rights and needs of indigenous peoples when planning and developing economic and developmental policy.
- The United Nations and governments at all levels must fully involve indigenous peoples in developing policies that affect themselves and their lands.
- The United Nations and governments at all levels must promote and respect the unique traditions, languages and religions of each indigenous nation within their state.

IFSW affirms the trend that indigenous peoples are organizing themselves to regain their rightful places and protest against further discrimination by governing states and emphasizes the need for non-indigenous peoples to act in solidarity with them in tackling discrimination.

- The interests of the indigenous have been historically undervalued and/or ignored and at times deliberately marginalized by the State and other interests.
- Organizations of indigenous peoples may serve to bring forth political, economic, social and political change and an end to discrimination.
- Each indigenous individual has a right to a national identity and a nationality and sympathetic consideration in cases of asylum.
- Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain their distinct political, economic, social, cultural and legal systems, while maintaining a right to participate in these systems within the State (**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, March, 2008**).
- Indigenous social workers should take the lead in development initiatives and services for indigenous peoples.

IFSW recognizes and acknowledges the special struggles of indigenous women.

- Policy must not reduce the dignity of indigenous peoples and especially women in particular as they are most often severely affected by the economic shift of power and/or cultural colonization.
- Governments must be vigilant and seek to avoid the exploitation of indigenous women and create policies that would prevent economic development from encroaching upon their basic human rights and dignities due to economic loss.

- The increase of indigenous women and children entering the sex trade and the trafficking in ‘slavery’ must be reduced through greater governmental and United Nations intervention and effective policies.
- Social workers must take direct responsibility in countering the sexual exploitation of indigenous women.

IFSW seeks to understand the situation of indigenous children, support their rights, and advocate for their needs.

- Indigenous children have the right to a primary school education as articulated in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Many indigenous children are employed in agriculture and factories around the world that prevents them from attending school on a regular basis.
- Social workers should advocate for children who are more at risk of suffering family violence when there is economic stress, dispossession, and a breakdown in community ties – factors that many indigenous communities face.
- When indigenous children are placed in the public child welfare system, social workers must strive to make decisions that benefit children in the long run.
- Social workers must work with indigenous communities to assist vulnerable children using holistic and culturally appropriate problem-solving methods within the community.
- The increase of indigenous children entering the slave trade and sexual trafficking must be stopped through greater governmental and United Nations awareness and effective policies.
- Adoption of indigenous children by childless parents of the industrial states must reflect the right to self-determination of indigenous parents, as well as well as the rights of indigenous children.
- Whenever possible, the perspective and value system of the indigenous culture must be promoted while guaranteeing children protection from violence.

<https://www.ifsw.org/indigenous-peoples/>

IFSW Indigenous Commission Vision

‘A Place for Indigenous Social Workers to Stand Strong’

IFSW Indigenous Commission Mission

The Indigenous Commission will instil Indigenous values and principles in the development and implementation of IFSW Policy, Education, Advocacy, Ethics, and Practice

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE - Indigenous Commission

PURPOSE

The IFSW Indigenous Commission will ensure indigenous voices are heard and valued by working:

- collaboratively with the IFSW Commissions and committees to foster further development of indigenous social work knowledges and practices,
- collaboratively with the IFSW Commissions and committees to influence, advise, consult and develop policy and procedures effecting and impacting on indigenous knowledges, practices and peoples worldwide,
- engaging with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues
- identifying and prioritising education and research specific to indigenous social work knowledges, practices.
- encouraging and promoting the establishment and maintaining of Indigenous Social Work associations within IFSW member countries.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

The IFSW Indigenous Commission is accountable to:

- IFSW Secretary General
- IFSW indigenous social work associations

RESPONSIBILITIES

The IFSW Indigenous Commission is responsible for:

- Supporting the development and sustainability of Indigenous Social Work Associations,
- Engaging, promoting, and communicating with IFSW member organisations, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other organisations to further the understanding of indigenous social work and concerns within all fields of social work practice and education,
- Providing regular written minutes and reports to the IFSW Executive Leadership Team,
- Ensuring that Indigenous Commission members are active participants and that regional representatives complete the tasks and outcomes set by the Commissioner,
- Any other task directed by the Secretary General

MEMBERSHIP OF IFSW INDIGENOUS COMMISSION:

Membership:

- A minimum of five (5) and a maximum of eleven (11) indigenous social workers in ‘good standing’ with an IFSW Member organisation and endorsed by the indigenous organisations or peoples represented by that member organisation or coordinating body for the country. Each region will nominate at least one representative and no more than two,
- Commissioner,
- Secretary General or his/her delegate (ex-officio),
- The IFSW President (ex-officio),
- Adjunct/Co-opt indigenous members when appropriate, as determined by the IFSW Indigenous Commissioner.

Selection Process:

- The inaugural Commission members will comprise the representatives nominated by the regions no later than December 2020,
- Any member organization of IFSW may propose a member to the IFSW Indigenous Commissioner,

- The proposed members must be endorsed by the indigenous organisations or peoples represented by the member organisation or Coordinating Body for that country,
- The Commissioner will follow a selection process, devised by the Commission and present the selected members for ratification and appointment by the IFSW Executive Team.

LEADERSHIP OF IFSW INDIGENOUS COMMISSION:

- A commissioner is determined bi-annually by the indigenous peoples who comprise the Commission.

The Commissioner will:

- Ensure decisions are reached collaboratively and by consensus, being respectful of the differing traditions that are observed by the members of the Commission.

LIAISON PERSON

- To advise the IFSW Indigenous Commission on all policies and procedures pertaining to the operation of IFSW.

TERMS OF OFFICE FOR THE IFSW INDIGENOUS COMMISSION

- The term for each member is for a period of 2 (two) years with the possibility of renewal for a further 2 periods,
- The term for an Adjunct/Co-opt indigenous member is for a period of 2 (two) years with the possibility of renewal for a further 2 periods.
- The term for Liaison person is for a period of 2 (two) years with the possibility of renewal for a further 2 periods.

DISCONTINUATION OF A TERM OF OFFICE FOR A MEMBER(S) OF THE IFSW INDIGENOUS COMMISSION:

- Voluntary resignation in writing from their position,
- Failure to uphold the purpose, accountabilities and responsibilities of IFSW and the Indigenous Commission.

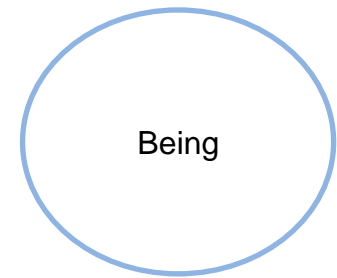
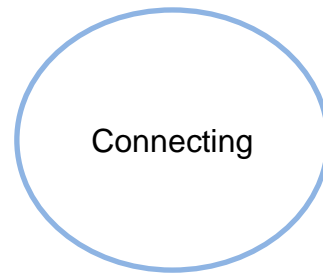
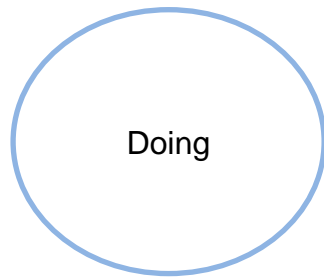
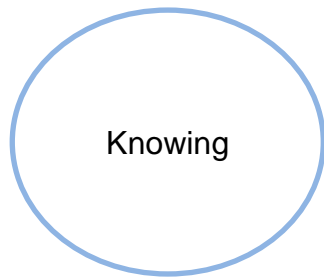
Process:

- A concerted process will be followed to seek resolution,
- The process will observe the rules of natural justice,
- If a resolution is not reached the IFSW President in consultation with the IFSW Indigenous Commissioner, the Secretary General and the IFSW Executive Committee will adjudicate an outcome.

DECISION MAKING:

- Decisions will be reached by consensus
- If consensus is not possible, decisions are reached as the result of discussions on the common good.

INDIGENOUS WAYS OF WORKING



Teaching
Learning
Research
Sharing

Policies
Procedures
Practices
Models

Relationships
Partnering
Connections
to land, place,
environment

Identity
Inclusivity
Leadership
Engagement

Global Definition of Social Work:

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (*IFSW: Definition of the Social Work, 2014*).

The International Indigenous Commission will:

Advance IFSW’s commitment to Indigenous Social Work by supporting Indigenous bodies of knowledge and perspectives to underpin theories of social work, social sciences and humanities. And that by providing a shared space for Indigenous bodies of knowledge to develop and flourish, social workers can engage with peoples and structures to address and enhance cultural wellbeing.

IFSW shall:

Protect and preserve a shared space that welcomes and values indigenous bodies of knowledge and cultures. IFSW will encourage Indigenous voices and cultures of the world to use their ways of knowing, doing, connecting and being to influence and contribute to all aspects of the work of IFSW.

IFSW commitment:

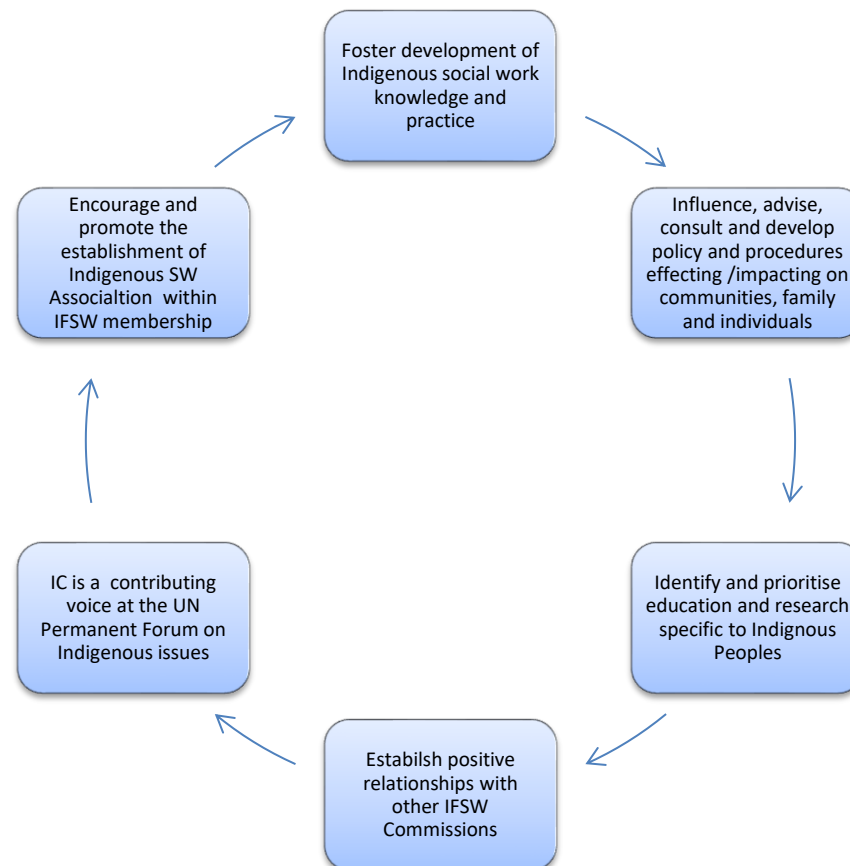
At its core IFSW acknowledges the links between Indigenous cultures, values, and the broader aims of social workers throughout the world. Respect, tolerance and protection of cultures are central to the IFSW’s mandate to ‘promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to the social work profession. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous bodies of knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing’ (2014).

IFSW supports the advancement of Indigenous Social Work through the educational, scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of peace and the common welfare of

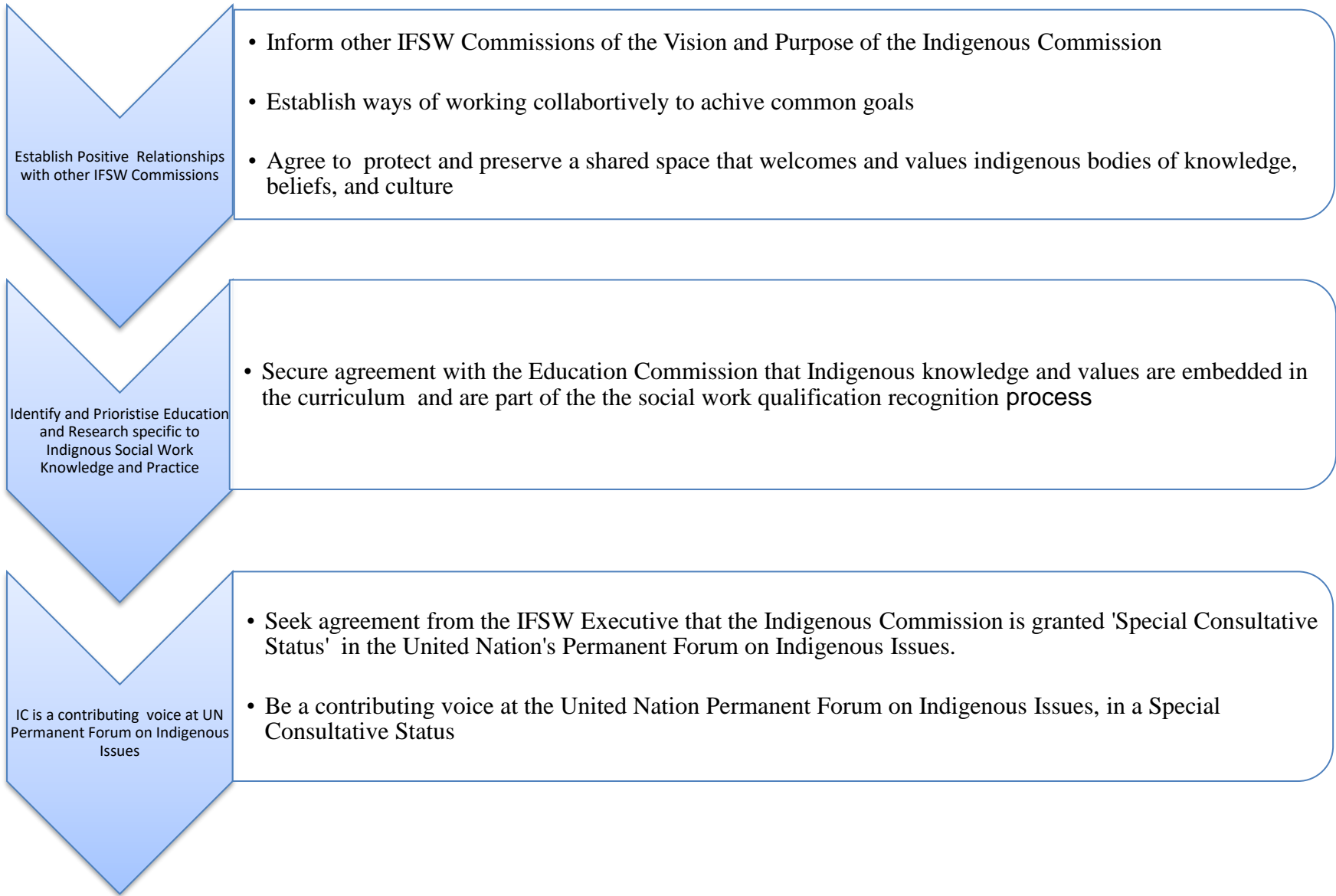
mankind (UNESCO Constitution, 1945) and the rights of self-determination of all peoples to freely pursue their cultural development. The Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation states that "each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved" and that "every people has the right and duty to develop its culture" (UNESCO, 1966, Article 1). IFSW recognises the importance of tolerance and listening to other ways of knowing. "A critical foundation of any civil society and of peace (*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, March, 2008)".

IFSW Indigenous Commission Strategic Goals - 2020-2026

The IFSW Commission: A Place for the Indigenous Social Workers to Stand Strong.
The IC will instill Indigenous values and beliefs throughout all aspect of IFSW Policy,
Education, Advocacy, Ethics, and Practice



ACTION PLAN 2020- 2024



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