

Commissions

Indigenous Commission

The aim of the Indigenous Commission is to create a structure for utilization of the indigenous knowledge and skills in service delivery locally and globally...

[Read more about the Indigenous Commis-](#)



Latest Statements

[Commemorating the 20th anniversary of the IFSW policy statement on Indigenous Peoples & Human Rights](#)

[International Day of Older Persons 2025 – Older Persons Driving Local and Global Action](#)

Commissioners

Global



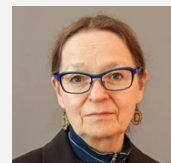
Hilary Weaver
Global Commissioner

Africa Region



Charles Rutikanga
Regional Commissioner

Europe Region

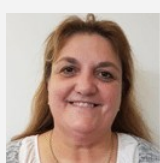


Margaretha Uttjek
Regional Commissioner

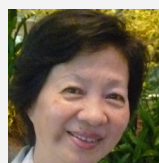
Asia and Pacific Region



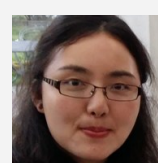
Caroline Tana-Tepania
Regional Commissioner



Linda Ford
Representative

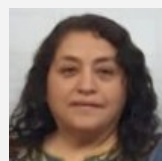


Dr Ling How Kee
Representative



Yang Jian (Yvonne)
Representative

Latin America and the Caribbean Region



Jenny Linares
Regional Commissioner

North American Region



Pamela L. Begay
Regional Commissioner

Commissions

Indigenous Commission

Commission membership

The Indigenous Commission consists of five members: Pamela L. Begay (from the United States representing the North American region), Carole Tana-Tepania (from Aotearoa/New Zealand representing the Asia and Pacific region), Charles Rutikanga (from Rwanda representing the African region), Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek (from Sweden representing the European region), and Hilary Weaver (Global Commissioner from the United States). The position of regional representative from Latin America and the Caribbean was vacant in 2025.

Report on general activities and achievements

The Indigenous Commission has developed a schedule of meetings that occur every other month. Each year we develop an annual workplan that identifies tasks, timeframes, and members of the commission who will take the lead on each project. This workplan provides a focus and structure for our work.

As Global Indigenous Commissioner, Hilary Weaver has participated in regular meetings with other Global Commissioners. This provides an opportunity to facilitate collaboration across commissions. It enables us to learn from and replicate their models, as we see fit. Likewise, other

commissions adopt or adapt our practices, as they see fit, and seek out collaborative opportunities. We also recognize that the Indigenous Commission may develop distinct ways of operation based on our values, accountabilities, priorities, and protocols as Indigenous people, as we identify how all peoples may benefit from integration of Indigenous Knowledges, norms, practices, values, and skills in service delivery, locally and globally. The Global Commissioner has also participated in regular meetings with the Secretary General and interim Secretary General of IFSW throughout the year to ensure that the work of the Indigenous Commission is in alignment with IFSW goals and strategies and to apprise IFSW leadership of developments and opportunities identified by members of the Indigenous Commission.

The Global Indigenous Commissioner has been involved in significant collaborative work with other Global Commissioners as well as IFSW staff to operationalize and implement the terms of reference that were passed by the IFSW Executive at the beginning of the year. These efforts are resulting in implementation of a more robust and collective model of work. The Indigenous Commission developed a Concept Note describing the focus of the Commission and a role description for regional representatives. The regional representative role description was integrated into a vacancy announcement to fill the Latin

Commissions

Indigenous Commission

American and Caribbean (LAC) representative slot on our commission and the call for applications was open in August. The Indigenous Commission, along with other IFSW Commissions is currently involved in collaborating with leadership in the LAC region to implement the appointment process. Interviews for a new LAC representative are scheduled and we hope to begin 2026 with this position filled.

Highlights for the Indigenous Commission during 2025 include participating in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, participating in conferences in Canada and Norway, issuing four statements through IFSW to commemorate key days, and exploring collaborative opportunities with other IFSW commissions.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and international conferences

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) took place in New York City from April 21 to May 2 with the theme *Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within United Nations Member States and the United Nations system, including identifying good practices and addressing challenges*. The Global Commissioner attended sessions for the first four days (self-funded) and met with the Executive Director of the Indi-

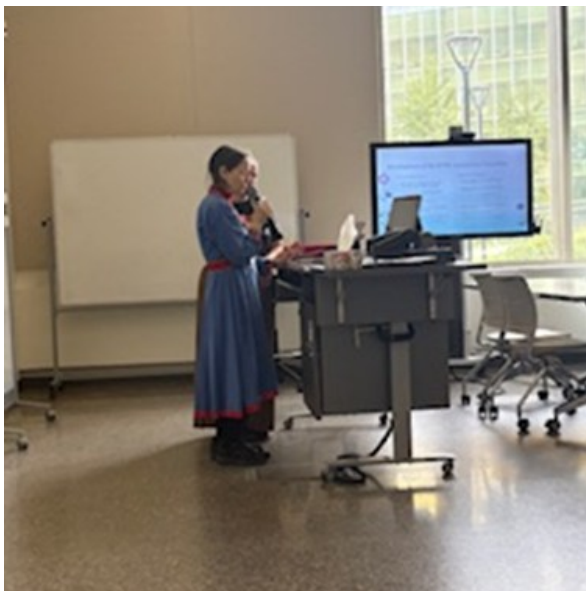
genous organization Cultural Survival to explore possible collaborative opportunities. While another commission member had also hoped to attend the UNPFII, external funding fell through at the last minute. The increasing costs associated with participating in the UNPFII and the lack of a budget led to this being the first year since the inception of the commission that we have not offered a side event during the Forum.



Pamela L. Begay, Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek, Hilary Weaver, & Carole Tana-Tepania at the IIFSW conference

Commissions

Indigenous Commission



Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek

The International Indigenous Voices in Social Work (IIVSW) conference was held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada August 12-15 and the Indigenous Commission offered a 90-minute workshop on the 14th. Four of the five members of the Indigenous Commission (Pamela L. Begay, North American Regional Representative, Carole Tana-Tepania, Asia Pacific Regional Representative, Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek, European Regional Representative, and Hilary Weaver, Global Commissioner) attended the conference and participated in the workshop although the fifth member of the Commission was unable to secure funding to attend. The IIVSW conference draws Indigenous social workers from around the world as well as some non-Indigenous allies committed to Indigenous issues. The

Indigenous Commission saw this conference as an ideal opportunity to highlight the work of IFSW and to gather information from conference participants to inform the work of the Commission. Workshop participants were very interested in establishing communication channels with the Commission. Participants noted the importance of the Commission advocating for changes in colonial systems and how Indigenous leadership can help redefine paradigms and shape the future of social work.

The Indigenous Commission also contributed to the IFSW European Regional conference held in Oslo Norway October 6-8. Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek, the European Regional Representative, participated in the Delegates Assembly that occurred prior to the regional conference. Her presence in the Delegates Assembly allowed her to meet and participate in discussions with other regional delegates, providing an opportunity to share information about the Indigenous Commission and receive feedback from delegates about our work.

The theme of the European Regional conference was Bridging Communities: Building Sustainable Futures with one of the conference subthemes being Indigenous Wisdom and Environmental Stewardship. The Indigenous Commission's European

Commissions

Indigenous Commission

Regional Representative and Global Commissioner worked with leadership of the European region to secure two prominent keynote speakers. Miriama Scott, an esteemed Māori social work leader delivered a keynote address on the first day of the conference entitled, Sustainability is Custodianship: It is not a Responsibility; it is an obligation. On the closing day of the conference, Michael Yellow Bird a prominent Native American scholar and member of the Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation delivered the keynote address, The Power of Ceremony: Indigenous Contemplative Practices, Neurodecolonization, and the Medicine Wheel. Additionally, the Indigenous Commission offered a workshop in which Miriama Scott offered reflections on the circumstances that led to establishing the Indigenous Commission, Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek described the work of the IFSW Indigenous Committee that was a predecessor to the Commission, Hilary Weaver described the Commission's current work, and Michael Yellow Bird offered reflections on how participation of Indigenous social workers has evolved in national and international social work organizations. The presentations concluded with Roy-Arne Varsi from the Norwegian Sámi Association Sámi Sosialbargiid Searvi sharing his perspectives on their work with Sámi communities and visions of collaborative future work. A robust discussion with the audience followed the presentations.



Presenters at the Indigenous Commission session at the IFSW European Regional conference: Miriama Scott, Hilary Weaver, Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek, Roy-Arne Varsi, and Michael Yellow Bird.

The IFSW European Regional conference was followed by a two-day post-conference extension in Alta Norway. The theme of the post-conference was Indigenous Social Work in the North and was attended by commission members Margaretha Karlberg Uttjek and Hilary Weaver. The opening keynote address, Reclaiming our Voices- Indigenous Resilience, was offered by Hilary Weaver on October 9.

Statements

The Indigenous Commission developed four statements that were published by IFSW during 2025. These statements call attention to important issues within Indigenous communities around the world. They serve an educational purpose and are a “call to action” to mobilize social workers

Commissions

Indigenous Commission

to address critical issues. Beyond raising awareness and calling for action, these statements provide social workers with resources and tools to use in their work, indicating how they can continue to expand their knowledge on these topics.



The Indigenous Commission issued a statement to recognize International Water Day, March 22. The statement describes the significance of water for Indigenous Peoples and for all of us in our shared world. The statement goes on to describe some of the responsibilities that Indigenous Peoples carry for water, actions that social workers have taken, and our shared path forward. The statement can be found [here](#).



Each year the Indigenous Commission offers a statement in honour of World Indigenous Peoples Day, August 9. The 2025 statement drew on the theme, Indigenous

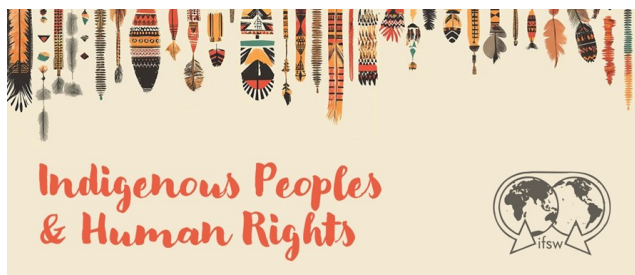
Peoples' right to self-determination: A pathway for food security and sovereignty. The statement describes how Indigenous Peoples have historically sustained themselves through deep, reciprocal relationships with their lands and traditional foods, calling on social workers to stand with Indigenous Peoples for food sovereignty, upholding their inherent right to self-determination, and recognizing the profound connection between traditional foods, culture, health, and wellbeing. The statement can be accessed [here](#).

The Indigenous Commission issued a statement to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons, October 1. The statement describes the significant roles that Elders play in their communities



around the world, highlighting opportunities for social workers to enhance the wellbeing of Elders, draw on their strengths, and act in support of Elders' rights, wellbeing, aspirations, inclusion, and transmission of Indigenous Knowledges. The statement can be accessed [here](#).

Indigenous Commission



On the global observance of Human Rights Day, December 10th, the Indigenous Commission issued a statement commemorating the 20th anniversary of the IFSW policy statement on Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights, noting that IFSW passed this policy articulating how upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples was firmly grounded within the social work profession's value system years before the United Nations finalized and passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in September 2007. The commemorative statement describes the process of developing the IFSW policy, an overview of its contents, and the significance of this policy. The original policy can be accessed at <https://www.ifsw.org/indigenous-peoples/>. The commemorative statement can be accessed [here](#).

Opportunities for collaboration

The Indigenous Commission remains committed to collaborating with other IFSW Commissions on areas of shared interest. As a follow up to conversations with mem-

bers of the IFSW Education Commission in 2024, the Indigenous Commission developed a proposal for a pilot survey to begin to identify how social work education programs integrate Indigenous Knowledges in their curricula. While both Commissions remain interested in this collaborative venture, limited capacity has slowed our ability to move forward with this initiative.

The Indigenous Commission continued its collaborations with the IFSW UN Commission in 2025, particularly around exploring the feasibility of in-person participation of Indigenous Commission members at the UNPFII in New York City. While only the Global Commissioner was able to attend the Forum in 2025, during her time there she met with members of the IFSW UN team based in the New York area about ways to strengthen participation in the future. Following the recent appointment of a new North American Regional Commissioner for the UN Commission, the Global Indigenous Commissioner reached out and the two held a productive in-person meeting on strengthening our collaborative work, including regular meetings to facilitate participation of Indigenous Commission members in UN events.

As a recognition of the longstanding commitment of members of the North American based branch of the IFSW UN Com-

Indigenous Commission

mission to the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples, even prior to development of the Indigenous Commission, we issued a statement commemorating the 20th anniversary of the IFSW policy statement on Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights. This organizational policy was drafted and moved forward by members of the UN Commission based in the New York City area and is described in the previous section.

Key planned activities and events for next year

The Indigenous Commission is currently developing our workplan for 2026. We anticipate continuing to explore opportunities to participate in the UNPFII and possibly other UN mechanisms but recognize these may be constrained by financial considerations. We plan to continue to issue statements, drawing social workers' attention to important issues for Indigenous Peoples. We will continue collaborations with other IFSW commissions, including moving forward with our plans to collaborate with the Education Commission to

explore how Indigenous Knowledges are incorporated in social work education and practice.

We are exploring opportunities for offering sessions at international conferences but recognize that being a small commission we face limitations of our capacity as well as financial constraints. We are guided by the feedback we received from Indigenous social workers at our workshop at the International Indigenous Voices in Social Work conference and will continue to seek ways to strengthen communication channels with Indigenous social workers around the world as well as transform our profession. As IFSW partners with other global social work organizations, the Indigenous Commission looks forward to opportunities to actively contribute to discussions that refine our key documents on the Global Definition of Social Work, the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training, and the Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles.

Submitted by Hilary N. Weaver, Global Commissioner