

Tiohtià:ke Statement

Catalysing policies for health, well-being and equity



“Skywoman” by Mark Kawesotom Light, artist from Akwesasne

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We endeavour through this statement to honour and carry forward the messages of the 2019 IUHPE companion [Waiora](#) and [Rotorua](#) Legacy Statements calling on health promotion communities and other global communities to make space for and privilege Indigenous peoples' voices and knowledges in taking concerted action to promote the health of all people, of Mother Earth and all life, now and for the future. Our health promoting actions emphasise promoting policies for health, well-being and equity.

The 2022 IUHPE conference opened with a protocol to welcome participants to the host Indigenous territory. A respected Kanien'kehá:ka (People of the Flint, Mohawk) knowledge holder offered '*Ohénton Karihwatéhkwén - the words that are said before discussing matters of importance*' which serve to bring our minds together as one by expressing our profound gratitude and appreciation to: the natural world; the People; our Mother Earth; the Waters; the Fish life, the Roots, the Plants, the Insects, the Foods that sustain our lives; the Fruits; the Medicines, the Animals; the Trees; the Birds; the Four Sacred Winds; the Thunders; our Grandmother Moon; our Elder Brother Sun; the Stars; the Four Sacred Beings, and the Creator.

This oration recognises the reciprocal caring web of natural and social relationships, essential for the continued existence of humanity. It suggests that humans must heed our roles and responsibilities to continually steward creation, and underscores that decision-making today, whether by individuals or global or national governing bodies, must consider 'the faces yet to come' – seven generations into the future. This Rotinonshonni (People of the Longhouse) philosophy expresses the power of unifying our minds and thoughts for the purpose of this gathering; to innovate, reclaim and revitalise ways for all to equitably benefit from nature, and create societies that are peaceful and just. We offer the suggestion that orations such as Ohénton Karihwatéhkwén be seen as guiding philosophies for future health promotion efforts.

Members of Health Promotion communities have long recognized that the root causes of social and health inequities lie in exploitative, oppressive, and unsustainable relationships globally within economic, political, environmental, social and cultural spheres. They further recognize that the planet and all living things are interrelated and that humans have responsibilities and duties to protect these life-sustaining relationships. There is also increasing awareness that narrow economic interests are driving the ways that we build our human habitats and that these have significant and negative impacts on planetary health. However, as the Waiora Statement makes clear, we have not done well to acknowledge and centre the longstanding knowledge of Indigenous health promoters among us, whose health promotion practices

¹ Tiohtià:ke refers to the city of Montreal in Kanienké:ha (language of the People of the flint, aka Mohawk)

have been with us for time immemorial. Indigenous health promotion sustains biodiversity, food sovereignty, and ecological integration, with millennia of experiences adapting to a changing environment through close connections with the land amidst waves of adversity. Indigenous Peoples among us, will lead the way when their knowledges, practices, and systems are adequately respected and resourced. Drawing on moral courage, health promotion researchers, policy-makers and practitioners must confront their discomfort, and unlearn and disrupt past assumptions and biases, in order to be the vehicles of systemic change towards more equitable healthful societies. We must commit to actively decolonize our practices, which involves a process of re-ordering what the colonial world created.

As a field committed to continuing renewal and to decolonization, Health Promotion aspires to engage more meaningfully with multiple world views, disciplines, and ways of seeing and knowing in order to position us better to break down barriers that silo, discriminate, and disconnect people and their relationships to each other and to the land. Such aspirations are essential to impact the structural determinants of ecological, human, and planetary health and well-being. Governments at all levels, and the people that they represent, must show leadership in envisioning, enacting, and implementing policies that explicitly ensure that *all* life, both human and non-human, will benefit from the gifts of creation.

Through this Statement, we reaffirm the 2007 United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, acknowledge the São Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health in 2021, and welcome the World Health Organization (WHO) Geneva Charter for Well-being from 2021's call to centre Indigenous knowledge and leadership. We are prompted by these precedents, the inspirational conference speakers, input from 2022 conference delegates and the wisdom passed down by Elders and knowledge keepers to do this work.

Colonization has impacted each, and everyone of us. With a unified voice, we call on global communities to privilege Indigenous peoples' voices and knowledge (including those from the Global North and the Global South), and put well-being, the health of the planet, and equity into all policies through the following actions.

Action Area 1.

Dismantle the colonial structures that reinforce white supremacy, exploitation, discrimination, racism, violence and inequity

- Respect and adhere to the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples as articulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Recognize spirituality, culture, language, knowledge systems, and identity as vital parts of human health and health promotion.
- Decolonize spaces, systems, and structures by changing power dynamics, creating non-colonial governance structures that promote self-determination and collective agency, and building channels and bridges between sectors, peoples, and the planet.

- Co-create equitable spaces where we *listen* to one another, value community knowledge as evidence, amplify voices that are not usually heard, give up power so young people can lead, and learn together to develop health promoting solutions for planetary health.
- Encourage Indigenous governance approaches that are not colonizer models – approaches that recognize ceremony, use non-colonizer language, use horizontal relational power structures and that dismantle vertical hierarchical power structures.
- Elevate and centre Indigenous knowledges and wisdom in policy discussions, facilitate reciprocal relations between humans and the earth, regenerate and redistribute wealth and resources linked to a sustainable economy and environment for all people and the planet.
- Tackle the social determinants of health for the most systemically oppressed communities, peoples, and countries (e.g. Global South) in order to “inoculate” entire populations against future shocks and stresses.

Action Area 2.

Strengthen reciprocal relationships to foster peaceful, just and inclusive spaces that are free from fear, racism, discrimination, violation and other forms of structural oppression.

Strengthening Communities

- Develop and sustain long-term reciprocal relationships between grassroots community members, organisations and local government policy-makers.
- Remove systemic, oppressive, and non-inclusive structural barriers to community action and engagement.
- Invest in communities to celebrate and value all cultures, languages, and relationships to one another as central to health promotion.
- Urge government decision-makers to invest in strengthening community integrator organisations who can connect community voices to decision-makers and resources in all directions.
- Support communities who are resisting corporate and public policies that will damage their environment.

Organisations & Health Systems

- Co-create spaces for collaboration across organisations to address common goals and catalyse new ways of thinking and doing.
- Integrate and fund culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches in health and social service systems for all people.

Corporations

- Put mother nature and ecosystems thinking at centre of corporate decision-making.
- Invest in green energy and other technologies that minimize harm to the environment.
- Require meaningful community feedback and Indigenous consent in their projects.

Local Governments and Policymakers

- Apply a health equity lens when assessing the risks and opportunities posed by policies and programmes, and measuring their effects on health and health equity.
- Design and implement equitable and coherent policies that privilege the voices and knowledges of those traditionally relegated to the margins.
- Enact policy and legal measures to hold corporations accountable for any harmful and extractive practices.

Universities and Researchers

- Decolonize health promotion curricula by adopting new pedagogical approaches that meaningfully centre authors who shift health promotion discourses in learning and training toward anti-colonialism and anti-racism.
- Design curricula that support university students, including health promotion students, to develop competency in planetary health, One Health, ecohealth, and other aligned discourses and networks of practice.
- Fund research that centres and values reciprocal relationships with communities in decision-making and leadership throughout the knowledge creation process.
- Integrate traditional knowledge, values and worldviews in research - for example:
 - Reposition Indigenous knowledge systems on a level with, or even greater footing than, with Western-based knowledge systems to prevent and mitigate disastrous climate change and environmental breakdown, and promote health, health equity and well-being.
 - Facilitate the use of Indigenous qualitative methodologies, trauma-informed approaches, and culturally safe approaches to develop and enhance culturally adapted programs, policies and services for and with Indigenous populations.

Action Area 3.

Catalyse individual and collective actions by all sectors of society to promote the health of the planet and its inhabitants

- Put mother nature and ecosystems thinking at centre of policy-making at all government levels.
- Call on governments at all levels to decarbonise economies, support biodiversity, access to fresh water, improved livelihoods, sustainable diets, food sovereignty, sustainable agricultural practices, land restoration, conservation, and the greening of food supply chains.
- Pass legislation that gives land and water resources legal status and rights to protect mother earth/the planet from privatisation and exploitation.
- Free systems of global governance from the domination of narrow economic considerations and commercial interests - for example:
 - Demand full cost-accounting for all economic and industrial endeavours and promote well-being budgets that account for what we take and what we give back to the planet as our primary life support,

- Pass economic reform policies that more equitably distribute assets (e.g. income, access to health care, education, employment opportunities),
- Promote “doughnut economics” thinking to find the sweet spot where the economy yields social and well-being benefits within the limits of the ecological capacity of the planet.
- Re-orient society to support land stewardship - for example:
 - Promote and enable all people to have direct contact with nature – starting with young children as early as possible.
 - Promote land as the active host and partner for people engaged in healing.

Action Area 4.

Catalyse transformative actions throughout IUHPE governance, leadership, membership and engagement processes

IUHPE Board and Leadership

- Monitor the implementation and progress towards actions outlined in the Tiohtià:ke Statement.
- Secure resources to support decolonizing IUHPE governance, leadership and membership structures in its Executive Board, global working groups, committees, and editorial boards (e.g. Global Health Promotion) by placing a requirement of equitable representation of members from the Global South, Indigenous peoples, and other historically underrepresented constituencies. Ensure that such groups are adequately resourced to participate and take on leadership positions.
- Work with Indigenous peoples to rethink the key principles and actions in health promotion and integrate in IUHPE governance, leadership, programming and policy practices.

IUHPE Programming and Policies

- Build policies that elevate health promotion to the level of planetary health and human wellbeing, and center Indigenous knowledge and leadership within IUHPE’s core competency and accreditation system.
- Advocate for research to support application of Indigenous-based and Black, Indigenous, and Racialized theories.
- Develop new health promotion competencies that reflect decolonial thinking and planetary health.
- Ensure that future conferences are designed in ways that may lead to sustainable partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples for the long term.

Individual members

- Challenge individual biases and unlearn assumptions that impede decolonizing practices in health promotion work and in relationships with Indigenous communities.
- Cede space and create structures within our workplaces that provide leadership opportunities for Indigenous and other traditionally excluded peoples in policy, research, and practice.

IUHPE collaborating with others

- Facilitate online and offline opportunities for intersectoral action and coming together of social movements across the world to generate political pressure and accountability for health, wellbeing and equity.
- Work proactively through politically independent, not-for-profit organisations in the Global South to influence policies and ground realities in these countries. Connect with environmental and rights-based movements fighting for social, economic and cultural justice.

At local/national government levels

- Develop and monitor the implementation of policies to ensure they promote healthy spaces and places that address the structural dimensions of health and equity.
- Include diverse community members, and particularly Indigenous peoples, in discussions about the design, implementation and monitoring of government policies to address climate change.

At the Global level

- Ensure that health promotion is a unifying force for recognizing common action across countries to address the social and ecological dimensions of health that affect everyone.
- Advocate for policies and guidelines developed at WHO, Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and WHO Regional Offices that encourage countries to see the value of health promotion and monitor progress on such action.

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