



International Indigenous Working Group on HIV & AIDS

Mission Statement

The International Indigenous Working Group on HIV & AIDS (IIWGHA) mission is to create an international voice and structure that links Indigenous peoples with their Indigenous leadership, varying levels of governments, AIDS service organizations, cooperatives, and others in global collective action to lower the disproportionate impact of HIV & AIDS experienced by Indigenous peoples.

Strategic Directions

- By empowering Indigenous people to reduce the spread of HIV and increase the quality of life by strengthening collaborations between international Indigenous communities, while respecting their autonomy and diversity;
- By increasing culturally appropriate prevention, care, treatment, and support for HIV & AIDS through collective advocacy, education, and the sharing of wise practices and socio-culturally relevant evidence;
- By creating opportunities for networking, collaborative advocacy, and resource brokering amongst Indigenous communities; and,
- By creating a global voice and hope for an ideal future for Indigenous people living with and affected by HIV & AIDS.

History of the IIWGHA

For over two decades, Indigenous Peoples around the world have been on a path leading towards the formation of an International Indigenous Working Group on HIV & AIDS (IIWGHA).

Early collective action began during the International AIDS Conference (IAC) in Montreal, Canada in 1989. The initial leadership was provided by the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center (NNAAPC) in the United States, and by Te Roopu Tautoko Trust in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The first International Indigenous AIDS Conference was hosted in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1991 by Te Roopu Tautoko Trust. The following year, an informal, ad-hoc meeting of International Indigenous Peoples met during the 8th International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam, Holland in 1992. In 1993, they met again at the annual International AIDS Conference located in Berlin, Germany. The Indigenous People who gathered at the early meetings listed above were considered an ad hoc group, although they were determined to meet at every International AIDS Conference.

In 2005, the International Indigenous Peoples Satellite Planning Committee was formed to plan the next year's Indigenous Satellite conference. By 2006, the working group called themselves the International Indigenous HIV/AIDS Secretariat (IIHAS) and participated in an Indigenous Satellite at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada. The intent was that the IIHAS would continue collective action on recommendations and priorities developed by over 300 participants. Most notably, the Toronto Charter: Indigenous Peoples' Action Plan on HIV/AIDS was released.

In 2008, the group met again at the Pre-conference of Indigenous and Afro-Descendent People at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, Mexico, which was particularly relevant for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. It showed the response by our peoples to HIV & AIDS and the crosscutting themes of sexuality and human rights. Finally, there was a unification of the agendas of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in the face of racism and all forms of discrimination.

In July of 2010, the IIWGHA met and laid the framework for a strategic plan during the Indigenous Satellite at International AIDS Conference in Vienna, Austria. The plan was finalized and published in 2011.

IIWGHA Guiding Principles

- **Acknowledge** that Indigenous Peoples have shared experiences relating to the AIDS epidemic and its impacts on our communities;
- **Affirm** that the AIDS epidemic continues to have a devastating effect on our communities;
- **Acknowledge** that Indigenous Peoples have inherent rights which guarantee them good health and well-being;
- **Acknowledge** that the changing patterns of the HIV & AIDS epidemic are placing Indigenous Peoples at increased risk of HIV infection
- **Recognize** that Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine their own health priorities; and,
- **Reaffirm** that Indigenous Peoples have the right to control all aspects of their lives, including their health.

IIWGHA Goal and Objectives

The International Indigenous Strategic Plan on HIV & AIDS for Indigenous Peoples and Communities from 2011 to 2017, is meant to facilitate an international voice and structure that links Indigenous peoples with their governments, AIDS service organizations, cooperatives, and others in global collective action to lower the disproportionate impact of HIV & AIDS experienced by Indigenous peoples.

There are six key objectives to the strategy, which are based on the input of the IIWGHA members during the Indigenous Pre-conference gatherings at the International AIDS Conference, July 2010 in Vienna, Austria.

1. Increase the visibility of the impact of HIV & AIDS in Indigenous communities at the international level;
2. Improve meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous people living with HIV & AIDS, in research, policy and program development at the national, regional and international level;
3. Work towards the accurate representation of Indigenous peoples in HIV & AIDS epidemiological data within individual countries or regions;
4. Provide capacity building and development to raise awareness about HIV & AIDS and Indigenous Peoples as a health priority;
5. Promote Indigenous specific approaches to the social determinants of health; and,
6. Conduct sustainability planning.

Foundations of the IIWGHA

The IIWGHA draws from the following international doctrines to support and provide a framework for its work.

- The Toronto Charter – Indigenous Peoples Action Plan on HIV/AIDS 2006
- The Greater Involvement of People living with AIDS (GIPA) Principle
- The Millennium Development Goals of United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS)
- The Vienna Declaration
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Rights of the Child

IIWGHA Organizational Structure

Terms of Reference for a formal organizational structure for the IIWGHA have been finalized and will be published in the Spring of 2012. Currently representatives from nine different countries comprise the governing body of the IIWGHA, and make all decisions regarding the growth, expansion, and policies of the organization. As growth is important to maintain values of inclusivity, fair representation, Indigenous leadership and sustainability, methods to expand membership to other Indigenous peoples and create regional representative bodies are being explored.

It is necessary that the IIWGHA should be fully supported and adequately resourced by governments and their stakeholders. The IIWGHA exists to build a unified voice for Indigenous peoples in collective action against HIV & AIDS. The host of the IIWGHA is the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network based in Vancouver, Canada and there will be rotating positions among countries. The host organization's primary responsibilities currently include:

- Developing and monitoring a global strategic plan to address HIV & AIDS among Indigenous peoples.
- Organizing conferences, satellite events and gatherings.
- Organizing an Indigenous-led follow-up to the International Policy Dialogue that is driven by an Indigenous agenda.
- Coordinating an Indigenous response to the global Indigenous HIV & AIDS pandemic.