

The Health of Indigenous Peoples:

THE KUCHING STATEMENT

Adopted at 3rd World Rural Health Congress,
Kuching Malaysia 1999



Further to the Durban Declaration, which calls for a Global Initiative of Health For All Rural People, we as rural health professionals from around the world who are present at the Third WONCA World Conference on Rural Health at Kuching, Malaysia, note with concern that:

- The health status of indigenous peoples in many countries is significantly worse than that of the population as a whole;
- Indigenous peoples largely represent the most marginalised and poorest subpopulations of the world.
- Many of the health problems of indigenous peoples arise from a disadvantaged socioeconomic status.
- The forced relocation of some indigenous peoples without consultation or informed consent may have adverse effects on the health of these communities and their members.

Consequently, we affirm that:

I. Rights

- A. The reduction of health inequities of indigenous peoples is in line with basic human rights.
- B. Indigenous peoples have the right to health and equitable access to health care.
- C. Strategies, partnership and commitment are needed to improve the health status of indigenous peoples.
- D. The health and welfare of indigenous women requires special attention.
- E. Indigenous peoples have the right to culturally appropriate health services preferably in their own language.

II. Indigenous Involvement

- A. It is essential that indigenous peoples are actively involved in improving their health status, through public or private initiatives, at every level.
- B. Indigenous peoples should always be involved in national and international forums concerned with rural health issues.
- C. Indigenous peoples should be trained as health professionals.

III. Health Professional Involvement

- A. Health professionals have a duty to advocate for a reduction in the health inequities faced by indigenous peoples.
- B. Health professionals have a duty to advocate for government policy that will address the social, environmental and economic determinants of health in order to reduce the health inequities of indigenous peoples.
- C. Health professionals have a duty to advocate for holistic public policy that includes non-health sectors in addressing health determinants.
- D. Health professionals should receive training in indigenous health issues and in negotiating public policy changes that will address health determinants.