

# Waiora – Indigenous Peoples’ Statement for Planetary Health and Sustainable Development

This Statement from Indigenous participants in the 23<sup>rd</sup> IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion (Rotorua, Aotearoa New Zealand) is a call on the health promotion community and the wider global community to make space for and privilege Indigenous peoples’ voices and Indigenous knowledges in promoting planetary health and sustainable development for the benefit of all. It should be read alongside the Rotorua Statement from all participants in this Conference.

Indigenous peoples are diverse and our worldviews, which have developed over millennia of human experience, are specific to peoples and place. However, there are fundamental commonalities in these worldviews that have provided the basis for Indigenous peoples’ movements that draw us together around our shared interests. Core features of Indigenous worldviews are the interactive relationship between spiritual and material realms, intergenerational and collective orientations, that Mother Earth is a living being – a ‘person’ with whom we have special relationships that are a foundation for identity, and the interconnectedness and interdependence between all that exists, which locates humanity as part of Mother Earth’s ecosystems alongside our relations in the natural world.

Understanding our place in the natural world in relational ways leads us to consider how access to the natural environment shapes human health and wellbeing, the impacts of our activities on the environment, and our inalienable collective responsibilities of stewardship which will benefit future generations. Within Indigenous worldviews our relationship with the natural world is characterised by reverence and values that include sustainability, guardianship and love. Planetary health is understood as the health and wellbeing of Mother Earth and of humanity as an inextricable part of natural ecosystems. It should also be noted that Indigenous languages are critical in articulating Indigenous worldviews as they enable the most full and accurate expression of Indigenous conceptualisations, and should be protected.

The forces of colonisation, capitalism and globalisation have caused massive environmental degradation, climate change, loss of biodiversity and the devastation of Indigenous communities. Further, they have led to intellectual imperialism and the widespread subjugation and exclusion of Indigenous worldviews, bodies of knowledge and voices. Prevailing Western and other worldviews promote individualism and anthropocentric perspectives that to human peril separate humanity from the natural world. This has encouraged human activity that accelerates the depletion of planetary resources, the destruction of ecosystems, pollution, climate change and increase in the risk of ecological collapse. Environmental degradation impacts disproportionately on Indigenous peoples because of close relationships with the natural world and our already marginalised circumstances in nation states. The silencing of Indigenous voices and the subjugation of

Indigenous bodies of knowledge has been detrimental to all, most evident in our global environmental crisis.

Indigenous health promotion (as opposed to the generic form of health promotion which has largely Western origins) emerged in response to Indigenous peoples' needs to make space for our own ways of seeing the world and as a vehicle to realise our aspirations to sustain future generations who are healthy, proud and confident as Indigenous peoples. It is an Indigenous-led endeavour with origins that stretch back in time to customary systems to maintain health and wellbeing that emphasised social and ecological connections. At the same time, Indigenous health promotion is open to knowledge generated from within other worldviews where there is alignment. Indigenous health promotion can be understood as the process of increasing Indigenous peoples' control over the determinants of health and strengthening our identities as Indigenous peoples.

Ecological collapse is the greatest threat to human health and survival globally. Health promotion (policy, research, education and practice) needs to change to effectively respond to the challenges of the anthropocene and bring intergenerational health equity into its systems and frameworks. Engaging with indigenous worldviews and bodies of knowledge provides opportunities to find solutions to this most pressing threat and ways forward to promote the health of Mother Earth and sustainable development.

We call on the health promotion community and the wider global community to make space for and privilege Indigenous peoples' voices and Indigenous knowledges in taking action with us to promote the health of Mother Earth and sustainable development for the benefit of all.