

Third Session, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
New York, 10-21 May 2004



**Collective Statement of Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific Region
Agenda Item 4(a): Education**

Agreeing Organizations:

Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies	Rapa Nui Parliament
Na Koa Ikaika o Ka Lahui Hawai'i	Te Runango o Ngai Tahu
Waikiki Hawaiian Civic Club	Ngati Tuwharetoa
Prince Kuhio Hawaiian Civic Club	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)
Ka Lahui Hawai'i	Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA)
Koani Foundation	National Association of Community Legal Centres
'Ilioulaokalani Foundation	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Dewan Adat Papua	Presentation Association
Bureau of Consultation for West Papua Indigenous Community Development	World Council of Churches (Australia)
Solidaritas Perempuan Papua	
Pacific Concerns Resource Center	
Bangsa Adat Alifuru	

This Pacific Caucus statement represents 21 organizations joining together from our region. Some of our recommendations have originated from the First Pacific Region Permanent Forum Consultation held on March 15-17, 2004 in Nadave, Suva, Fiji. This consultation was organized by the Pacific Concerns Resource Center (PCRC) that represents 200 affiliated organization in 33 countries. PCRC is a NGO with ECOSOC status. Indigenous peoples from Australia, New Zealand, Bougainville, Guam, Kanaky, Hawaii, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Vanuatu, West Papua and Fiji attended. Regional Civil Society Organizations represented included the Council of Pacific Education, the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific, the Pacific Conference of Churches, God's Pacific Peoples Programme, the Pacific Islands Association of NGO's and the Pacific Island Broadcasting Association/PAC News. In addition two diplomatic missions, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia sent indigenous participants. We would like to thank Pacific Region Indigenous Expert Permanent Forum Member Mililani Trask for attending the consultation and for her work to prepare a report to Permanent Forum. We would also like to thank the World Bank, IWGIA and NZAID for funding this first Pacific Region Consultation.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UN PFII recommends that UNESCO fund and facilitate a world forum on education and indigenous peoples with the full participation of indigenous peoples that would contribute, inter alia, to enriching the indigenous education concepts and the pedagogic practices.
2. UN PFII recommends that states work in conjunction with indigenous educators to promote Indigenous Immersion School System of learning. This system is based on curriculum being taught in the native language & curriculum based on indigenous culture and knowledge. This system of learning shall be implemented for & include early childhood to University students.

3. UN PFII request UNESCO to fund a research project on indigenous knowledge paradigms and psychologies which can be applied in indigenous teaching/methodologies for the education of indigenous children and youth.
4. UN PFII requests that UNESCO provide a twice a year referred journal for indigenous peoples of the Pacific to publish their concerns, research, and experiences. (Each publication could focus on a particular theme e.g. "Immersion Schools".
5. UN PFII urge the observer member states in the Pacific region to provide culturally based education and rehabilitation programs and classes for indigenous inmates.
6. UN PFII recommend that all UN world conferences be organized, in conjunction and close cooperation with interested governments, UN related bodies, and NGOs, with official parallel events relating to indigenous peoples and with full participation by indigenous peoples. A worthy example of this action implementation of the UNPFII's recommendation in this area is discussed in E/C.19/2004/10 relating to the Global Forum on Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society- and event held in parallel with the World Summit on the Information Society.
7. UN PFII urge the immediate adoption of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially as a standard setting instrument for the rights of Indigenous peoples relating to education.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Background of Pacific Region

The Pacific is a region, which receives the highest level of foreign aid (per capita) in the world. Data gathered from UN agencies the ADB and World Bank verify that poverty in the Pacific is increasing (40% Vanuatu, 48% Samoa, 50% Kiribati). The Pacific is a region of indigenous peoples. With few exceptions (Fiji, Hawaii, Guam) the vast majority of peoples and children being educated in the Pacific are indigenous peoples who are Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian.

As the result of the Pacific regions colonial history, modern affiliations among educators is divided into those PICs (Pacific Island Countries) with a British, U.S., French, and Dutch colonial histories.

Significant research has been done on the issues relating to education in the Pacific. Pacific island countries (PICs) now have evidence that formal education is failing to meet expectations. The failure is most evident in the area of economic and development reform. On the average, Pacific countries spend 18-21% of their development and recurrent budgets on formal education on a minute group of elites. Grave concerns have been raised about the relatively high failure rates of students in the Pacific. Some Pacific indigenous educators attribute these problems to "inherited structures from our colonial past (Puamau 2002:67) and "disconnectedness" – educational systems that don't relate to indigenous communities (Thaman 2003:6). As Thaman states:

"... most Pacific academics, including indigenous ones, have not tried to investigate how their respective academic fields of study and work would function in indigenous communities. This has resulted in professional and vocational inefficiency and misuse and abuse of scarce resources. There is an urgent need for indigenous educators to interrogate existing educational structures in order

to see the extent to which they have marginalized [indigenous knowledge] as well as the people who produced that knowledge." (Report on the First Pacific Consultation on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Exhibit 7)

B. Pacific Example Relating to Denial of Education – Maluku Islands

In Maluku, although education has always been considered by the indigenous Alifuru as one of the most important elements of fundamental rights of the child. In the current war situation, however, the everyday lesson is how to live to survive. From 1999 until 2002 more than 85% of the capital city of Ambon and its surrounding areas have been destroyed. This include schools, the polytechnic and both universities, UKIM and UNPATTI. Since April 25, 2004 the Indonesian military and Jihad forces have waged a new war situation in Maluku. They have started where they have left off in 2003 by destroying what was built up in the meantime.

As a result of the traumatic experiences of the war situation, all the young people will be deprived their basic human rights for a long time relating to elementary needs in education, proper schooling and the benefits of scientific and technological developments.

C. Impact on Indigenous women – West Papua

Education that is needed in all parts of life is non existant to West Papua in general and for the indigenous women in particular.

In the patrilineal custom where the West Papuan woman receives no consideration in education, and the Indonesian political aim to hold back all developments of West Papua. The situation of a West Papuan woman becomes two times harder. There remains no change at all in the situation of the indigenous woman in West Papua.

Despite problems in financing, communication and sometimes unreachability and proper skills and capacity several small women groups and organizations have made attempts to change the backward situation of the West Papuan indigenous women, but to no avail.

D. Human Right of Education

According to Paragraph 14 of the International Covenant of the Right of Indigenous Nations, drafted in Geneva in 1994, all indigenous peoples, have a right to "all levels and forms of education, including access to education in their own languages, and the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions according to their own customs and traditions".

The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples addresses indigenous education with the following articles-

Part IV

15. Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All indigenous peoples also have this right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. Indigenous children living outside their communities have the right to be provided access to education in their own culture and

language. States shall have effective measures to provide appropriate resources for these purposes.

16. Indigenous peoples have the right to have the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations appropriately reflected in all forms of education and public information. States shall take effective measure, in consultation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all segments of society.

17. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages. They also have the right to equal access to all forms of non-indigenous media. States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity.

The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reinforces and attempts to be the implementing vehicle of the Human Rights. Conventions in this regard, the rights of education are well established in the International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. These international conventions and declarations are reflected in world educational conferences pertaining to indigenous peoples.

According to Article 1.7.1 of the Coolangata Statement, ratified by thousands of indigenous educators at the 1999 World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education in Hilo, Hawai'i, "meaningful, empowering and culturally sustainable education for indigenous people will be possible only when indigenous peoples have the control (a fundamental right) and the resources (an inarguable responsibility of States/ governments) to develop educational theories, curriculum and practices that are indigenous and determine the environment within which this education can best occur".