

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Tenth Session, New York, May 16-27, 2011
AGENDA ITEM 6: Comprehensive Dialogue with UN Agencies, May 23, 2011
Statement Presented by Dr. Wilton Littlechild, Ambassador for the WIN Games and 2010 Olympic Winter Games

World Indigenous Nations (WIN) Sports Inc. advises that the inaugural WIN Games which were proposed for Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, in the summer of 2012, have been postponed.

The Board of WIN Sports wishes to express its most sincere appreciation for the ongoing support of the Government of Manitoba. Through the leadership and vision of the Honourable Eric Robinson, Deputy Premier of Manitoba and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, a partnership among the governments of Manitoba and Canada and WIN Sports was proposed for the WIN Games to be hosted by the City of Winnipeg. A critical element of this partnership was that the Government of Canada would match the financial contribution of the Government of Manitoba.

Unfortunately, our concerted efforts to secure a decision to support the WIN Games from the Government of Canada were unsuccessful. Ultimately, in discussion with the government of Manitoba, we had to conclude that insufficient time remained to adequately organize and hold the WIN Games in the summer of 2012. Therefore, we were compelled to accept the cancellation of the agreement with Manitoba.

WIN Sports has been considering how best to respond to this situation. Certainly, we, and many supporters, are deeply disappointed with the outcome. Last year at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the President of WIN Sports, spoke about the importance to Indigenous youth of an event such as the WIN Games. We called for Indigenous Peoples around the world to organize and to contact WIN Sports if they wanted to participate in the WIN Games. Hundreds of Indigenous Peoples and numerous Olympic Organizations from all regions of the world have done so. To them, we offer our sincere apologies for the need to cancel the WIN Games in 2012 in Winnipeg.

Our message to you today is that the dream of the WIN Games remains a vision to be fulfilled. Adversity and struggle are facts of life for Indigenous Peoples...this is but another of those temporary obstacles. We are now formulating new plans and strategies to realize our goals. Building on the positive lessons we have learned, we will intensify our dialogue on holding the inaugural WIN Games with the International Olympic Committee and with other potential partners among interested States, international organizations and private companies. In parallel efforts, we are examining how to strengthen the support for local Indigenous organizations; the development of coaches and training programs; and building of facilities so that Indigenous youth may realize the benefits of organized sports. Most importantly, we give you our commitment to maintain the connections which have been established. We thank you and the Permanent Forum for your continued interest and support and look forward to announcing the future venue and date of the WIN Games. We ask UNICEF if they will now join us to ensure Indigenous children and youth enjoy fully the Right to Play in accordance with article 31 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*?