

ICCH 12
Indigenous People's Program
Talking Circle
Nuuk, Greenland
9/14/03

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The following is information which was contributed by Native and non-Native people participating in the second day of the Talking Circle. Permission was received by the people in attendance to record the issues that are important to Native people across Circumpolar nations as well as to provide feedback on future Congresses and the Indigenous Peoples Program.

General/Meeting

- There are many statistical reports that some of us don't understand, it would be better to have fewer reports and more conversation
- Did not meet enough Greenlandic Inuit people at this Congress
- Very few Saami participants, need more
- Have an Information Desk on Indigenous presentations, which presentations to go to, and a whole Indigenous Track
- This was a Western-focused Congress—we should look beyond that, the Congress needs to be more Indigenous
- Need definition of what "Indigenous" actually means to us the indigenous people
- Indigenous people were almost invisible at the Congress
- Learn to work together
- Learn to accept and learn to let go
- Name tags should say that the person is Indigenous, working in research so connections can be made (currently cannot tell anything from nametags)
- Indigenous people who have own flag should use it on nametag (ie: Saami have own flag)
- One evening, have a separate social gathering for Indigenous People
- Put energy into the things that are working
- International meetings help a lot
- Traditional ways should carry a lot of weight
- Strengthen next Congresses - focus on Indigenous People
- Need to have indigenous researchers as presenters including plenary speakers
- Rita Blumenstein's presentation at the past Congress on traditional herbs and healing was invaluable
- Indigenous people need to be heard and recognized
- IUCH Council had 3 Indigenous people on it, lost 2 seats in the election yesterday – this is unacceptable

- Only 1 Indigenous person is now left on the IUCH Governing Council. Not fair, Not enough representation
- Difficult to make progress in a non-indigenous council—they will decide all aspects of the next Congress
- What is “Indigenous” in IUCH?
 - Could be Maori, South African, etc.
 - Doesn’t have to be Arctic or Circumpolar
 - Similar issues across the countries
- Indigenous Working Group needs to:
 - Bring these issues to the IUCH leadership
 - Set the vision for the Union—or it will go back to the way it was

If there can be an Indigenous meeting the evening before the next vote of At-large representative, then we can have a stronger voice

Values/Worldview

- Meet in places where people live in the natural way, slower life, and family values
- Community-based and community-initiated research is important and needs to be a priority - Also needs to be presented at Congresses
- Use more Talking Circles to learn from each other

Health

- Mental health, suicide and substance abuse among young, indigenous people is a grave concern
- Healing for suicide, mental health, substance abuse—need to get to the heart of the problem, the trauma, don’t blend in
- Need to use wellness, not illness models – traditional ways and practices

Research

- What is “Indigenous Research”?
 - Study ourselves? (not enough indigenous to do this)
 - Others study Indigenous people?
- When “majority” studies “minority” the focus is often on the negative
- Education—too much focus on Western, not traditional (ie: Elders have PhD in life)
- Research should be done **with** the communities (not done in many places)
- Indigenous Education is:
 - Story-based (oral), you hear them more than once
 - Subtle, indirect
 - Observation
 - Participation
 - Encourage child to exercise brain
 - Memory

- 50-60 nurses met in Nuuk this week and agreed to break the ice; dealing with the same health problems but not sharing experiences. Will work on sharing health issues together, very much alike
- Russia has an indigenous health project that ends this year:
 - Yupik (large area);
 - Partnering with indigenous people on this project—a BIG step forward;
 - Information is going back to the people
- Important connections being made here between Indigenous people (ie: US and Nuuk)
 - No explanation, it just is
 - Strength comes from the Spiritual part of all people