Media Release

World Federation of Public Health Associations
Public Health Association of Australia

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Indigenous public health takes a leap forward on the international stage

The World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) is pleased to announce the formation of its first Indigenous Working Group.

In April 2017, at the 15th World Congress on Public Health, over 40 Indigenous delegates at the Yarning Circle supported the formation of an Indigenous Working Group. This working group was ratified by the Governing Council of the WFPHA on the 15th of November 2017.

It is estimated that there are 370 million Indigenous People across 70 countries around the world. Many Indigenous Peoples are a minority in their own country, experience poorer health, have lower life expectancy and are among the most disadvantaged people in their population.

Michael Moore, President of the WFPHA, said “The formation of this group demonstrates the WFPHA commitment to working with Indigenous peoples from around the world to improve their health and wellbeing.”

The group will be co-chaired by Adrian Te Patu from New Zealand who is also a member of the Governing Council, and Carmen Parter from Australia who is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Vice President for the Public Health Association of Australia. Emma Rawson from New Zealand and Summer May Finlay from Australia are co-vice chairs.

“The Indigenous Working Group aims to assist in reducing the health disparity and inequities experienced by Indigenous people globally,” said Mr Te Patu.

Mr Te Patu recognizes the “differences among Indigenous peoples but also our similarities which are the strengths of this group.”

The Working Group is underpinned by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Self-determination is a key component of the Declaration; therefore the Indigenous Working Group will be led by Indigenous peoples.

“It is important to recognize that this group embodies Indigenous self-determination and will be led by Indigenous peoples,” said Mr. Moore.

“To address public health concerns among Indigenous peoples culturally appropriate solutions are required. The Governing Council understands that Indigenous Nations know what is required and have the skills and capacity to address the issues they face,” said Mr Moore.
Carmen Parter, Co-Chair said “This is an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to come together to support each other and seek out research collaborations that develop the evidence base that informs global Indigenous public health policies.”

The Working Group’s objectives are: to bring together Indigenous peoples from around the world to share and learn from each other, engage in collective advocacy, partner with existing international groups working in Indigenous affairs, and source any funding or in-kind support to support the work of the Indigenous Working Group.

Indigenous members of WFPHA are invited to join the Working Group, with non-Indigenous people invited to join as associate members.

The Working Group hopes to hold its first face to face meeting in May 2018 at the WFPHA General Assembly in Geneva.

More information about the Working Group can be found on the WFPHA website: http://www.wfpha.org/about-wfpha/working-groups/indigenous-working-group.

Please follow the Working Group on Twitter @IndigenousWFPHA.

For further information/comment:
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