

WHY CANADA SHOULD SUPPORT AN INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS GLOBAL HEALTH STRATEGY

The problem: Current Global Health strategies in Canada do not recognize the need for an independent, but interconnected strategy for Indigenous populations.

Why the problem needs to be addressed:

1. Canada will not be able to show that it has met the millennium development goals among its Indigenous population in Canada if an independent, but interconnected in country indigenous health strategy is not part of Canada's global health strategy. Disparities persist in the health of Indigenous peoples in Canada compared to the rest of the Canadian populace. Furthermore, Canada currently doesn't survey the health of approximately 1/3 of its Indigenous population with respect to basic public health indices such as infant mortality rate.

2. Canada will contribute to the worsening of conditions for Indigenous peoples globally with respect to millennium development goals if Indigenous populations are not considered in the global response to the millennium development goals. It is possible to achieve all of the Millennium Development Goals without impacting positively on the lives of Indigenous peoples, and policy makers are not taking this into account. States may divert resources to achieve the goals, enabling the more visible and politically influential majority groups to achieve the goals, whilst the situation of Indigenous peoples is allowed to deteriorate further or is ignored. No safeguards have been built into the goals to prevent this from occurring.

3. The language, history, and systems of international Indigenous health networks are distinct from those of Global Health networks. For example, the term NGO is not commonly used among Aboriginal organizations in Canada; and Indigenous communities internationally share a history of and response to colonization that is different from non-Indigenous populations.

4. Canada is a world leader in existing international indigenous health networks. These networks are independent but interconnected to Global Health networks. Global health networks can actually learn from these international indigenous health networks.

Finding the solution:

1. Support for the International Network for Indigenous Health Knowledge and Development – international meeting to be held in Vancouver, October 2005.
2. Ensure that a fair proportion of Global Health research funds are directed towards Indigenous organizations for International Indigenous Health Research (ie CIHR-IAPH, national First Nations, Metis, and Inuit governing organizations).
3. Create an administrative infrastructure that supports independent but interconnected international indigenous and global health strategies.

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