

Oaxaca Declaration on Indigenous Education in the Americas

We indigenous educators from Canada, Mexico, Guatemala and Bolivia, gathered at the Encounter on Indigenous Education in the Americas, declare:

1. In these times of a globalization that causes the disappearance of economic, social and cultural frontiers, indigenous education becomes more than ever, a key political and educational strategy for the maintenance of indigenous identity and the recovery and development of aboriginal languages and cultures.
2. Currently, formal indigenous education in the Americas has various faces: countries where indigenous education is a question of full scale struggle and a high profile issue, but is little understood by national governments and even by many indigenous educators and parents. In other countries there have been some advances in language development and curricular design, with the active participation of aboriginal parents and educators, but in general, all of them lack the funding to truly develop indigenous education.
3. There are laws that support indigenous education in a number of American states, but these laws are ignored because many of these states are indifferent to the education that indigenous communities and peoples require for their general development and for the development of their languages and cultures.
4. Indigenous education is conceived of as a political and educational project of the indigenous peoples affected by this education. For this reason such education must be autonomous and contain the fundamental principles that sustain communitarian life, such as reciprocity, communality, and respect for nature and for humans as a part of it. One strategy is the construction of alternative indigenous curricula both in basic education and in the formation of indigenous educators.
5. The indigenous delegates to the Encounter on Indigenous Education in the Americas commit to build an organization that goes from the community to the regional, national and international levels, and which is capable of guiding the advance of indigenous education within the framework of international conventions concerning education and indigenous rights. We need to trust grassroots indigenous organizations as the corner stones for progress in the field of alternative indigenous education.
6. The delegates to this encounter demand of the national states the explicit recognition of the first peoples as founding peoples of the nation states of the Americas and of the indigenous peoples and communities as legal entities.
7. For this reason we call on national governments to assign sufficient funds for the development of an intercultural and bilingual indigenous education at all levels, in order to contribute to the linguistic and cultural development of the first peoples as well as for the sustainable development of indigenous communities and peoples throughout the hemisphere.
8. The indigenous participants in this encounter recognise the practices of racism and discrimination by non-aboriginal societies towards our peoples and communities. We demand equal rights and respect for our ways of being.
9. In order to reduce such discrimination and practices of inequality, the delegates to the Encounter on Indigenous Education in the Americas, drawing on our own educational experiences and our struggles, propose an inter-cultural education for all national-states. If

we do not change national societies, we cannot create new social conditions conducive to a more egalitarian relationship between the different peoples who make up national states.

10. We must be alert for efforts by national governments to privatise indigenous education within the context of “free” trade agreements. This requires the establishment of alliances to defend public education with all progressive social, political and civic organizations.
11. We believe that it has become necessary to develop a network of educators, researchers and other involved sectors to exchange educational experiences and research in regional and international encounters, as well as between indigenous peoples and educators at the local, national and international levels, taking advantage of the new communication tools that the internet offers. This would permit us to have a website where experiences and problems facing indigenous education can be posted, allowing for the sharing of liberatory projects and programs related to indigenous peoples and communities throughout the hemisphere.
12. The struggle for aboriginal education exists throughout the Americas. The delegates to today’s encounter will constitute the seed of an international organization of indigenous educators to promote the educational development of our peoples and communities as our contribution to social transformation.
13. This new international network commits itself to the ongoing revision of advances and problems in indigenous education, as well as the training of the aboriginal professionals that indigenous education and the general development of the indigenous peoples of the Americas require.
14. We support the struggle of the workers of the Indigenous Education Department of the Secretary of Public Education of Mexico who have suffered labour harassment, abuse of authority and government repression during the past two national governments. We call for a resolution of the conflict and respect for the rights of the employees of the Indigenous Education Department. We also endorse the struggle of indigenous educators in Mexico to achieve autonomy for indigenous education and we protest the repressive acts that state and national governments have carried out against indigenous teachers.

City of Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico, March 30, 2006

Hemispheric Indigenous Educators' Network

First Plan of Action

1. It is proposed that each indigenous organization or people create an alternative curriculum that takes as its point of departure the experiences of history, culture and language of the indigenous peoples and communities of the Americas. But it is not enough to simply develop a curriculum. The struggle for its implementation must be incorporated into the broader indigenous struggle.
2. Organizations of indigenous educators should be strengthened at the regional, national and international level so that organized indigenous struggle becomes a bastion of the demands of indigenous peoples and communities throughout the continent.
3. A contact list will be created to establish and maintain ongoing communication between indigenous educators and peoples throughout the hemisphere.
4. An international bulletin on indigenous education will be created and posted via the internet to share relevant information regarding indigenous education.
5. The Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA Network) should create a web portal that facilitates ongoing communication between indigenous educators in the Americas and for the circulation of urgent actions regarding violations of the rights of indigenous educators.
6. The participating organizations commit to organise pedagogical and linguistic workshops that support the development of indigenous education and the professionalization of indigenous educators.
7. The work of indigenous educators should be directed toward the strengthening of an international and national pedagogical movement to build alternative educational projects.
8. The next encounter of the Hemispheric Indigenous Educators Network shall take place in approximately one year from this date. This encounter will evaluate advances in fulfilling the commitments made in this first Encounter on Indigenous Education in the Americas.

*Hemispheric Indigenous Educators' Network
City of Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico, March 30, 2006*