



# THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES  
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

*General Secretariat - Office for International Affairs and Human Rights*

## Consultation on “An Indigenous Communion”

**Karasjok, Norway, 20-24 September 2006**

Indigenous Peoples were put on the agenda at the LWF Assembly in Winnipeg in 2003. This is reflected in the Assembly Message where the issues of Indigenous Peoples certainly were one of the most important themes. More importantly the Assembly adopted a resolution asking the LWF to initiate a specific indigenous program - which should focus on networking; study work in the area of gospel, culture and indigenous spiritualities; and human rights/land rights.

This is the reason why we were invited by the LWF to attend a consultation in Karasjok, Norway, 20-24 September 2006. As we came together we understood our main mandate to be discussing how this indigenous program should be initiated, outlined and organized.

In the next three years we expect the LWF to:

1. Establish an advisory group concerning the indigenous program. This advisory group should be given the mandate to outline guidelines for the initiation and operation of the indigenous program in accordance to the actions on Indigenous Peoples taken at the Assembly in Winnipeg in 2003.
2. Establish this advisory group during 2007. The advisory group should consist of one indigenous representative from each of the following regions: Africa, Asia, Pacific, Latin America, North America, Europe - altogether 6 representatives.<sup>i</sup>
3. Mandate the advisory group to begin formulating advice to the LWF as soon as the representatives are appointed and are able to communicate with each other.
4. Provide a budget for the advisory group to meet at least once a year. During the first year of its work the advisory group should have the opportunity to meet twice.
5. To have one staff person in Geneva who has the indigenous program as her/his main responsibility. This staffing should be in place from 2007.
6. Ensure that indigenous issues are profiled at the next LWF Assembly.

In our discussion we underlined three themes, and the discussion brought the following points forward:

### 1. Human Rights/Land Rights

To be indigenous is to be rooted in the land – a territory through which we are connected with the earth. Land rights and territory are crucial to the identity of indigenous people, and are fundamental rights. From an indigenous perspective, rights to land and territory is a crosscutting issue for all human rights.



We seek an approach to these issues that incorporates Christian values, and caring for the whole human being and the community.

Our approach to the human rights dimension should encompass the issues of:

- Environmental rights and resources
- Intellectual property and traditional knowledge
- Children's rights
- Women's rights (including addressing sexual and gender-based violence)
- Diakonical work

## **2. Facilitating networking for indigenous people through regional and international consultations and exchange programs**

One of the main issues that has come up during the debate has been the need for the LWF to help organize meeting places for indigenous people, at both regional and global levels. This enables us to discuss Christian and cultural issues, and helps us to solve problems in our local churches and grow as a people. This also provides the LWF with a network of people for reference on indigenous questions.

We know that there already are in place regional processes related to indigenous peoples within the LWF, and LWF-supported indigenous programs among its member churches and field programs. This work should be continued, expanded and consolidated.

Networking with other international and regional church/ecumenical networks on indigenous issues, including the World Council of Churches, should be emphasized.

The need for work in the area of education was also an important issue for the consultation participants. There is a strong need for indigenous people to learn about themselves and their cultures and to exchange experiences with others who are in the same or similar situations. This also involves the use of different media, including Internet and printed publications.

It is natural and necessary that indigenous youth and women should be represented in all of this work, and that they should have the possibility of having their own forums on these issues.

Networking should contribute to cultural survival/revival, and living in continuity with one's cultural origins.

## **3. Theological and ethical study (gospel and culture), and indigenous spirituality**

The LWF Assembly resolution asked the LWF to initiate a study program related to gospel and culture and indigenous spiritualities.

As a first step we expect the LWF to establish an indigenous theological study group on an international level. This group might be organized in different ways. And it's important that this group should have appropriate youth and women representation. Preconditions for establishing such a group within existing study programs in the LWF would be that this group be free to set its own agenda, and that it will be a group of indigenous theologians.

What makes our theological enterprise indigenous, is that our theology is community-based and rooted in a communal value system.

We call for the elaboration of an indigenous theology/hermeneutic:

- involving ideological change, and changing the way of looking at traditional Christian beliefs (contextualization).
- incorporating ethical values from indigenous perspectives.
- including indigenous women's perspectives in the formulation of indigenous theologies.
- based on a specific methodology of indigenous theology.
- entailing an ongoing/developing discourse.

We propose:

- an indigenous theology and exchange program (training and workplace).
- a scholarship for indigenous theology.
- the creation of regional groups for (indigenous) theologians.
- youth representation in the process of doing indigenous theology.
- the establishment of an indigenous theology center/s.
- the possibility of including indigenous religious traditions in interfaith dialogue programs.

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<sup>i</sup> Asian participants at the consultation recommended that consideration be given to appointing two representatives from Asia to this group, given the size and diversity of the Asian region.